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"Man is to live; and all things live for Man"

Nature and Ecology

In John Milton's *Paradise Lost*

par

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Table of Contents

Introduction

It seems to be a common conception that in Christian thought, Man is the greatest of God's works and all creation lies at his disposal. This belief has long had a pervasive influence on Western literature and philosophy. As such, it can be felt strongly in works pertaining directly to Christian tradition, such as John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Published in either X or XII books, Milton's work begins with the fall of Satan and ends with the fall and subsequent banishment of Adam and Eve. Undertaking the heavy task of writing an interpretation of such a sacred subject was not inconsequential for Milton, particularly considering the power of the Catholic Roman Church in Italy, Spain and France at the time of his writing, although the Church of England was definitively declared separate from the Holy See during the Elizabethan Religious settlement (Greene 58-9). Milton himself was staunchly opposed to Catholicism and even considered the 'Anglican Protestantism' which was the state religion of England in his time to be too close to Catholicism for his comfort. He was therefore writing *Paradise Lost* on a subject of great importance to him, yet the poem does not only seem to reflect seventeenth century debates in theology. Instead, *Paradise Lost* articulates many key philosophical, theological, and scientific discoveries which were emerging in Milton's time. In the context of the growing trend of eco-criticism, the question of Nature and ecology is becoming increasingly important in Milton criticism, as evidenced by works such as Ken Hiltner's and Diane Kelsey McColley's.

It is undeniable that Nature plays an important part in *Paradise Lost*. Whether the same claim can be made of ecology is less certain, considering that the field of ecology could not truly be said to exist at the time when Milton was alive and writing, at least not in the modern sense. While works such as Aristotle's could be said to have lain the foundations of ecology, the word 'ecology' was coined in 1866, and Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) has been called the father of environmentalism. Modern ecology only started to emerge in the late

nineteenth century. However, Nature does play a central role in *Paradise Lost* despite the apparent focus on the human protagonists, Adam and Eve, as well as on Satan, who was even considered by some to be the true hero of the poem, or on sacred figures such as the Father and the Son. Be it through the loss Garden of Eden or Satan's banishment from Paradise, different places also play an important part in the unfolding of events throughout the poem. A close reading of *Paradise Lost* in the tradition of new historicism reveals a much more harmonious link to Nature than that which Christian dogma of gnostic influence appears to prone. The phrase 'in a state of nature' is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as meaning, within Christian theology, "in a morally unregenerate condition, unredeemed by divine grace." (Oxford English Dictionary, 'Nature'). Despite the apparent negative opinion Christian theology has of Nature, Hiltner, who studied Milton and Nature extensively, claims that Milton's deconstruction of what he calls the 'Greco-Roman-exalted Judaic mindset' places him in “such place-friendly approaches as Native American spiritualism” (Hiltner, 6).

Nature itself is defined as "the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans and other human creations" (Oxford English Dictionary, 'Nature'), which would entrench the separation of Man from Nature within language itself. Such a division being present within language would make it an inherent quality of Western thought. In fact, the word 'nature' has more than one meaning within the English language. It can also be the "physical force regarded as causing and regulating the phenomena of the world" or the "basic or inherent features, character, or qualities of something" (Oxford English Dictionary, 'Nature'). In *Paradise Lost,* Milton appears to use the word nature mostly in the second two senses. He usually refers to the physical world as 'Earth' or the 'world' although his usage of the different terms is not always extremely clear. In order to avoid confusion, I will capitalise Nature when it indicates the physical world collectively or the physical force which regulates

the phenomena of the world, but not when it indicates the nature of something or someone. Additionally, I will include Earth and the physical world in my study of Nature within *Paradise Lost*, although I will endeavour to keep my usage of the term as coherent with Milton's as possible. I will capitalise Earth when it indicates the planet and not the element, as well as Man when it refers to mankind as opposed to a single man.

In a time where understanding of ecology is becoming central to ensuring our future, as global warming and climate change threaten to destabilise modern society, it becomes increasingly relevant to question our view of the world. Mankind has long regarded the natural world, as a society, from an entirely anthropocentric viewpoint. The rest of the world was perceived as a resource, and animals, for example in Cartesian thought, were little more than machines. However, it appears evident that while mankind depends utterly upon Nature to ensure its continued survival and well-being, that it is not the case for Nature, which would in fact carry on all the better if mankind were to go extinct.

Paradise Lost is a canonical text in English Literature that has influenced hundreds, if not thousands, of subsequent readers. As such, it is particularly interesting to study what Milton tells us of the link between Man and Nature in his retelling of the original fall, as well as how it may be connected to ecological issues at the time of Milton's writing and to the present day. Milton's England was already starting to industrialise: the last great forests had been cut down, Man was beginning to win the 'battle' over Nature. Considering the representation of forests and Nature in dark, negative terms throughout the Middle Ages, as is clearly illustrated by the imagery of fairytales where dangerous or evil happenings took place in dark woods (The Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, etc.), this 'victory' over Nature could be seen as a good thing by many people. But human dependance on Nature was recognised quite early. In fact, the perception of Nature in Milton's England has many links with ecological thought in our time.

1. From Nature to Ecology

1.1 Nature in Milton's England

In order to understand the role of Nature in *Paradise Lost*, the first section of this work will focus on outlining the status and perception of Nature in Milton's England. A modern reader may have the perception that at the time Milton was writing it, English Nature was yet wild and thriving. In fact, this was far from being the case. Milton's era was marked by the gradual destruction of England's natural world. There appears to be three very important turning points happening at the time, all linked to technological and scientific advances. The first is the increased exploitation of Nature and what Man came to perceive as 'natural resources,' which followed industrialisation. The second is a division occurring between science and art. This lead to the differentiation between what McColley calls the "language of natural science and philosophy" or "proto-science," and the "language of poetry and other kinds of speech" (McColley, *Poetry and ecology*, 1). Thirdly, there was the consequence of the moving populations both within England itself, with rural populations migrating to the cities, and on the other hand the ongoing migration to the "New World." This movement is tied to the theory of a loss of a sense of place, presented by Hiltner as a form of de-rooting.

As Hiltner points out (1-2) industrialisation was rapidly growing in England, the last old growth forests were being cut down, and the revolution of agriculture was causing lands which had until then been left mostly untouched to be transformed and utilised. The way in which lands and forests should be managed was much debated. In 1653, Sylvanus Taylor claimed in *Common Good; or, The Improvement of Commons, Forests and Chases by Enclosure* that deforestation had become a central issue for England and that "all men's eyes were upon the forests." (Thirsk, 310). November of the same year saw the passing of the Act for the Deforestation, Sale, and Improvement of the Forests (Thirsk, 316). There already existed, however, a certain awareness of the importance of the natural world. Hiltner chooses to refer

his readers to John Evelyn's Silva, “a sentimental and unabashed plea for the preservation of forests” (3). In fact, the image of the forest changed due to deforestation perhaps as early as the sixteenth century, Robert Pogue Harrison describes, with its representation in literature going from “sinister” to “innocent, pastoral” (100). The threats faced by Nature were plenty; Diane McColley lists a few of them when she explains that:

> Seventeenth century England had the same "environmental" problems we have today, some age-old, others produced by new technology: deforestation, air pollution, confinement of rivers and streams, draining of wetlands, overbuilding, toxic mining, maltreatment of animals, uses of land that destroy habitats and dispossess the poor. Human beings and other beings have always manipulated nature, but these problems were accelerated by increased power over nature without sufficient ethic or policy to temper this power. (2)

In the context of *Paradise Lost*, it is fascinating to see how much of this behaviour is exhibited by Satan, as I will explore below. McColley's insistence that the problem is a lack of ethics and policies is especially relevant if one considers exactly how policed life was in the seventeenth century, be it by religion, class, or law. The number of restrictions, especially on women, is staggering to consider today. The absence of such laws in regard to Nature is therefore all the more striking in this context, especially since the advent of industrialisation marked the beginning of an era of destruction and exploitation for Nature. McColley quotes Francis Bacon and his acknowledgement in *The New Organon* (118-9) that "Now the empire of man over things depends wholly on art and sciences. For we cannot command nature except by obeying her," as well as "Only let the human race recover that right over nature which belongs to it by sound reason and true religion" (4). The problem, of course, is that 'sound reason' should be considered carefully considering that people were still being tried for witchcraft in England in the Stuart era, as was studied for example by Alan MacFarlane in *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A regional and comparative study.* Human rights were just beginning to be established, animals were considered as machines in Cartesian thinking, and

slavery was still legal in most of the world. As for 'true religion' this is perhaps even more difficult to define, McColley points out (4). Bacon's sentiment at first appears excellent, but for the question of whether mankind truly possesses any rights at all over Nature. Such an idea would be both characteristic of anthropocentric Western thought and inherently unreconcilable with most contemporary ecological theory, especially that of deep ecology. Bacon shows instead an ideology of exploitation and imperialism that helped establish an era of subjugation both of Nature and many indigenous people. In fact, the problem of nature and ecology was also very much a problem of class.

In "*A Declaration to the Powers of England, and to all Powers of the World, shewing the cause why the common people of England have begun... To digge up, manure, and sowe corn upon George-Hill in Surrey*" Gerrard Winstanley, a Leveller and Universalist accuses some lords of manors of having trees cut for their own use on already over-exploited common lands, yet forbidding the poor from exploiting "Wood, Heath, Turf, or Furseys." At the same time, he advocates the right of the people to "cut and fell... The Woods and Trees, that grow upon the Commons" (Winstanley, Works, 270, 251, 257, 272-4) in order to plant enough crops to sustain the poor until the harvest (McColley, 104). What we may now call sustainable exploitation was closely linked to the unequal distribution of resources, but also to deforestation due to the making of charcoal for ironworks. Gerard Boate writes that at the end of the forty year peace following the subduing of the rebellion in Ireland at the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the inhabitants of Ireland lacked wood for burning and even for building, as many counties were nearly bare of trees (114-22). It is hard to see, in such circumstances, how the importance of an 'ecological' attitude could have been lost on thinkers contemporary to these events.

For the working classes, the industrial revolution was not a good thing. The higher level of education of those who would most profit from the new technologies, and whom, despite the anachronism, could be called capitalists, as well as the abundance of human workforce

and the lack of work clearly shifted the balance of power in favour of the factory owners, etc., marking the advent of a couple of centuries of almost utter misery for coal workers, cloth mill workers, in a more general sense the working class. Pollution was however not only a problem for the poor, though they were certainly more affected. As early as 1661, John Evelyn writes "It was one day, as I was Walking in Your MAJESTIES Palace at WHITE-HALL, … that a presumptuous Smoake … did so invade the Court" that "... Men could hardly discern one another for the Clowd, and none could support, without manifest Inconveniency" (William H. Te Brake, 337). Evelyn blames two nearby smoke-stacks of coal for this event. This is only one example of what was a serious nuisance in 17th century London, a subject Evelyn wrote about extensively in *Fumifugium : Or the Inconvenience of the Air and Smoake of London Dissipated*, (1661). The lack of ecological conscience that seems to characterise industrialisation had very real, very early consequences on the quality of life of the people living through it. Yet, it took at least a couple of centuries for ecology to become a general, public concern, rather than that of only the most directly affected individuals.

One reason for the persistence of the attitude towards Nature as an exploitable resource, McColley suggests, is a division between the language of 'proto-science' and the language of poetry. How could something so immaterial as language play a role in the relation between man and nature? McColley calls attention to the theory that humans cannot talk about Nature without laying claim to it, as language appropriates and separates us from what we give names to (7). She proposes that the concept of language we could call 'ecological' could therefore be linked to a renunciation of a mechanist theory of language, which focuses upon language as derived, objectified, and abstract. The approach McColley suggests is much like Merleau-Ponty's in his phenomenological approach to language, which offers a view of language as something that is not merely "a closed system or the sum of morphological, syntactical, and lexical meanings, but, rather, is first lived, and as such gives

rise to a phenomenology of language including both its sedimented and creative movements." (Tymienicka, 371). The language of poetry should therefore be a defence of expression arising spontaneously from the perceptual experience of the body in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 194, quoted in McColley, 9). Milton's poetry is certainly structured. It contains musical or mathematical 'beauties', the forms, meters, and rhythms that Milton called his 'numbers' (9). Many poets have since sought to free themselves from what they perceived as the oppressive structure of older forms of poetry. Wether they did not, in doing so, simply create other structures and patterns remains to be seen. In any case, the natural world itself is filled with numbers, be it through the Fibonacci suite or the golden ratio, and as is demonstrated by Leonardo DaVinci's sketches, for example that of the Vitruvian man. Therefore, finding ecological language would not mean breaking free of structure, but rather recognising the independence of language from structure as well as its status of being directly linked to the perpetual experience of the body in the world.

Another problem of language lies in its anthropocentrism. It was created by humans; why should it not be anthropocentric? The tendency to want to 'capture' Nature in poetry may be viewed as indicative of a deeper desire to possess and subjugate. Be it through zoological gardens or putting butterflies in glass cases, humans have oft displayed a desire to capture Nature in a much more physical manner than through language. The true question would be whether that desire is innate or acquired, and the subject would require further consideration, for example through a comparative study between the languages of native or indigenous people and European cultures as opposed to how they interact with wilderness. As far as language goes, it is equally pertinent to consider, while looking at the etymology of 'native' and 'indigenous' how such cultures could be so much more sustainable and closer to Nature.

The word 'native' has, since the 1800's, simply been used to indicate someone originative from a particular place, usually in contrast with European settlers. However, in the late fourteenth century, it would have meant, as an adjective, "natural, hereditary, connected with something in a natural way," from Old French *natif* "native, born in; raw, unspoiled" (14c.) and directly from Latin *nativus* "innate, produced by birth," itself from *natus*, the past participle of *nasci* (Old Latin *gnasci*) to "be born," and related to *gignere* "beget," from PIE root **gene-/*gen-* "to give birth, beget," with derivatives referring to familial and tribal groups (see *genus*). From the late 15c., it would have been used in the sense of "born in a particular place." From early 15c. as "of one's birth," it would also have been used from the mid-15c. in the sense of "bound; born in servitude or serfdom," also, as a noun "a bondsman, serf." The use of the term Native American is attested from 1956 (Online Etymology Dictionary, native (adj)).

Disregarding the troubling association between 'native' and 'born in servitude or serfdom,' it appears clearly that a native is directly tied to a place, which links McColley's argument about the importance of language with Hiltner's argument about the loss of place our ancestors suffered from due to modernisation and dualist philosophy, amongst other causes, and as will be seen throughout this work. Native, when used as a noun, would mean (from the mid-15c.,) "person born in bondage," from native (adj.), and in some usages from Medieval Latin *nativus*, noun use of *nativus* (adj.). From the 1530s 'native' is used as "person who has always lived in a place." It is applied from the mid-seventeenth century to original inhabitants of non-European nations where Europeans hold political power, for example American Indians (by 1630s); hence, native would have been used contemptuously of "the locals" from 1800 (Online Etymology Dictionary, native (n)). Following this etymological study provides us with fascinating insight into the circle formed by the natural world, its inhabitants, and their subjugation and bondage at the hands of a foreign, Western settler who has lost his

own sense of place, his own native soil, and his own link to Nature. The treatment reserved to the New World and Native culture was unfortunately indicative of a desire to exploit and subjugate rather than preserve or treasure what the settlers themselves had lost.

Another term used quite interchangeably with 'native' in order to indicate cultures other than the modern Western one is 'indigenous.' It holds much the same meaning: "born or originating in a particular place," and is present since the 1640s, from Late Latin *indigenus* "born in a country, native," which itself comes from Latin *indigena* "sprung from the land, native," as a noun, it even means "a native," and literally "in-born," or "born in (a place)," from Old Latin *indu* (prep.) "in, within" + *gignere* (perfective *genui*) "beget," from PIE root **gene-* "to produce, give birth, beget" (see genus). Indu "within" is from archaic endo, which is cognate with Greek endo- "in, within," from PIE *endo-, extended form of root *en "in" (see in (adv.)) (Online Etymology Dictionary, indigenous (n)). It is perhaps not a coincidence that both these terms, native and indigenous, both with heavy relation to place, to roots, to the natural world, came to be popularised or were coined at a time when industrialisation was in motion and the Western world was losing its own roots, its own place.

Before the fourteenth century, at earliest, it can be argued that 'native' and 'indigenous' were not yet concepts because most populations were still 'native' and 'indigenous.' After the era of industrialisation and the discovery and conquest of the New World had begun, again, language would have come to the forefront, this time to divide those populations that still had a link to their native soil, and those who had lost it. Both these terms, native and indigenous took a mildly pejorative meaning; thus, Hiltner tells us that Milton accuses Christianity and more specifically the dualistic tendency of Medieval theology to reach for the intangible world and disdain the tangible, of privileging Heaven over Earth (76).

McColley, in her study of the separation in language between science and art during Milton's era, observes that many of the poets and writers of the time still had much contact

with scientists and that many of them nevertheless heeded the natural body of the nation and the world. In fact, she writes, Henry Vaughan was a medical doctor and his brother Thomas an experimental hermeticist; Margaret Cavendish knew Descartes and Hobbes and spoke to the Royal Society; Milton corresponded with Bacon's admirer Henry Oldenburg, and probably met Galileo (2). She provides numerous other examples of how poets and writers were knowledgeable in science and the great advancements of their time. However, the divorce of science and Nature, mankind and Earth was already well advanced. Science and medicine used to recognise, albeit somewhat mistakenly, a direct relationship between man's body and the natural world. The post-Cartesian notion that the body is in principle autonomous from the environment would have seemed profoundly strange to most people living in sixteenth and seventeenth century England (Poole, 12). In fact, in 1619 Samuel Purchas asks:

> Is not the Haire as Grasse? the Flesh as Earth? the Bones as Minerals? the Veines as Riuers? the Liuer, a Sea? Are not the Lungs and Heart correspondent to the ayrie and fierie Elements? The Braines, to the Clouds and Meteors...? the Eyes, to Starres, or those two Eyes of Heauen, the greater Lights? And the circular forme of the Head, to the globositie of the Heauens? (30-1)

The human body is therefore a natural world in and of itself, indivisible from it as it contains the same elements, and the cosmology or ecology of the world becomes the cosmology or ecology of the body. In fact, early medicine, for all its regrettable tendency of considering that bleeding patients was a perfectly adequate remedy and its lack of knowledge or understanding of basic hygiene, was much closer to the natural world than what followed in the age of science.

The concept of early medicine was in fact multifaceted. Poole demonstrates this by quoting Leonard Barkan who outlines four approaches to cosmology based on such speculation as Plato's (Barkan, 14). Of most interest here are the Galenic and Paracelsan approaches, which revolved around the model of the chemical geocosm. According to Poole:

> In this model, the ecology of the body is directly related to the ecology of the environment. One's bodily health, and even what today we would term one's mental health (or even, on a more mundane level, one's "moods"), was organically related to the elements that compose the world and its climatic conditions, since the four humours (blood, bile, phlegm, and black bile) correspond to the four elements (air, fire, water and earth). (13)

These elements were not only influenced by their surroundings and in direct correspondence with the natural world, but they were in a constant state of flux and change, much as Nature itself is. The self was not limited to the human but was in constant interaction with the natural world of which it was a part, or an extension. The divorce between science and Nature that took place around that time certainly allowed for great medical advances but it also seems to, based on the cartesian notion of self, have amputated a great deal of man's natural understanding of his environment and of his own body. In fact, we have spent so long considering the body as anything but porous and easily influenced by its surroundings that the knowledge that air pollution absorbed through the skin (as shown for example by Drakaki, E, Dessinioti, C and Antoniou, C.V. in their study *Air pollution and the skin*) kills just as well as when it is being inhaled seems to have taken much of the world by surprise. The division between the language of science and the language of art and poetry that McColley notices seems indicative of a deeper scission not only between science and the natural world, but between Man and the natural world.

Finally, it seems appropriate to turn to the ultimate element that appears to pervade both Milton's era and *Paradise Lost*. Loss of place was, as we can see in both the works of Hiltner and McColley and as is underlined by the evolving use of the terms 'native' and 'indigenous,' an ongoing phenomenon. It can be linked with the loss of the commons, or "commonable grounds" which began mostly in the mid-1600's. "We in the modern west" Hiltner writes, "have all but forgotten that many of our peasant ancestors were so throughly bonded to their places on earth that separation from place seemed a fate worse than

death" (1-2). Lilburne, in his description of a case that occurred in Epworth, explains how, while the commoners found the drained land was fitter for grain, they lost profit for summer pasture, navigation on the destroyed river Eidle, and fishing and fowling (1-6, quoted in McColley, 92). When the King contracted commissioners to drain the land that used to belong to the commoners, and make it fit for farming and growing crops, they fought with all legal means to retain their rights over the commons, which used to belong to everyone, as all had a right to its use.

In fact, a number of works aiming on the improvement of land produced widespread flooding, and other regions were "allegedly drained so dry that the commoners were forced to buy water for their cattle" (Lindley, 57). There is a plethora of poetry arguing against man's heavy-handed management of the natural world (McColley, 93-9). Loss of place can be closely linked to the duress many commoners were subjected to due to the mismanagement and defacement of what used to be their 'ancestral lands', committed to their use for the longest of time, and that were being seized by the King or the Commonwealth or a number of other actors wishing to exploit them. The commoners found themselves under the obligation to leave, with their choices often limited to joining the industrial workforce or emigrating to the New World in search of yet unspoiled and unclaimed lands - which of course, led to the theft of Native American lands, much in the same situation as English Commons. The parallel is only reinforced if we remember the earlier association between the term 'native' and 'born in servitude, or serfdom,' as the commoners of whom we now speak are the class that were called 'serfs,' in contrast with noblemen or the clergy. It appears the greatest threat Nature has to face, but also the greatest threat most humans have to face, as Milton seems to recognise in *Paradise Lost*, is greed, a trait Eve describes as belonging to Satan:

> What hath bin warn'd us, what malicious Foe
> Envying our happiness, and of his own
> Despairing, seeks to work us woe and shame

By sly assault; and somewhere nigh at hand
Watches, no doubt, with greedy hope to find
His wish and best advantage, us asunder, (8.253-8)

Greed is not only first mentioned in *Paradise Lost* as a satanic trait, but it serves to corrupt hope, one of the purest sentiments, and turns it into something negative. When greed is once again mentioned it is in the key point of *Paradise Lost* and of the fall itself: Milton writes of Eve that "Greedily she ingorged without restraint" (8.791) when eating the forbidden fruit. There is clearly a link between greed, Satan in his rebellion and Eve when she ingests forbidden knowledge. Eve had anything she could desire in the Garden, and all her needs were met. To want more was greed. Milton's advocation of restraint and temperance could not be clearer. Of course, to know or believe that man's management of nature should be tempered by sound reason and true religion, as Bacon advocates, is a far cry from it actually being applied.

Hiltner writes that place, while having been much discussed in some modern movements such as deep ecology, is often underestimated in regard to its impact on modern ecology. Much of the mismanagement and destruction that led to our modern ecological crises could be pinned down to this early separation between our ancestors and their place of origin, which was only exacerbated by the de-rooting many went through when they chose to leave for the New World, be it as a result of poverty, famine, religious persecution, or simply because they were in search of a better future. On the one hand, we have the Old World peasants described by Joan Thirsk in his work *Agricultural Policy,* who defended that the space being reclaimed by the agricultural works and draining of the marshes was already valuable, and who instigated a series of riots and lawsuits to defend the land that had afforded them lush pasture, fish and fowl (V.II.313). Ultimately they were unsuccessful. On the other hand Wendell Berry's *A Native Hill* (85) mentions road builders in America who

> on the contrary, were placeless people... Having left Europe far behind, they had not yet in any meaningful sense arrived in America, not yet having devoted themselves to any part of it in a way that would produce the intricate knowledge necessary to live in it without destroying it. Because they belonged to no place, it was almost inevitable that they would behave violently towards the place they came to. (Hiltner, 17)

Ironically, the road builders he speaks of were probably the descendants of the Old World peasants who fought against the destruction of their own ancestral lands, and were now perpetuating the destruction, in turn, against the Native Americans. It seems too big a coincidence that cultures intricately connected with a certain place would be so much in tune with it, and so much less likely to deal the widespread sort of environmental damage that can be observed in our current predicament.

Although there would still be much to say about Nature and what we could call pre-ecology in Milton's England, the points covered above offer a good overview of what was a pivotal point in regards to man's relation to Nature. While the idea of loss of place, or loss of one's roots, is not new, the advances of both science and technology, the division between science and art and of the language of science and poetry, between Man and Nature, the discovery of the New World, all appear to have exacerbated and accelerated a tendency for spurning the Earth that Milton, as we will study in the following chapter, seems to denounce in *Paradise Lost*. The image of Nature in *Paradise Lost*, as well as its link to the protagonists, is indicative of the ongoing events as well as of the broader dialogue between different ideologies which came to the forefront during roughly the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. The debate between monism and dualism (both post and pre-Cartesian) the influence of Greco-Roman modes of thought, the various images of Nature between the different branches of Christianity (mainly Catholicism and Protestantism) find their way into middle seventeenth century epic.

1.2 Ecological Thought in *Paradise Lost*

In this section I will study if ecological thought can be found in Milton's representation of Nature in *Paradise Lost*, and what form it takes. As we have seen, nature is central to the text. It is powerful, important, almost anthropomorphised, and very close to God and to Man. The word 'ecology' did not exist when Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, as it was first coined in 1873 in German by German zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), to designate the branch of science dealing with the relationship of living things to their environments (Online Etymology Dictionary, ecology (n)). Considering this, identifying and analysing ecological themes becomes all the more interesting and important, as it places Milton and literature as the forerunners of a movement that took much longer to even become a public concern. This begets the question of whether *Paradise Lost* is an ecological text. Both McColley and Hiltner make several excellent arguments and points in that respect, of which I will outline and develop the most important in the following section. Firstly, following the trail laid out by McColley in the previous section, I will look at the language Milton uses in regards to nature itself. Nature, in Milton's poetry, can be described in turn as something quite dark, or light and beneficial. How can those two, seemingly conflictual aspects of nature be reconciled? Secondly, I will study how there is certainly an anthropomorphism to Milton's portrayal of nature, and it seems to possess its own agency in many cases. Thirdly, I will look at how destruction of natural habitat is linked to demonic modes of behaviour.

Milton offers us several different aspects of nature throughout *Paradise Lost*. To begin with, the Garden of Eden is pristine, untouched but for the tender care of Adam and Eve. It provides them with everything they need for their sustenance, and is perhaps the clearest image of a harmonised co-existence between Man and Nature. The Garden does need tending to, as is shown by Eve's address to Adam:

Adam, well may we labour still to dress

This garden, still to tend plant, herb and flower.
Our pleasant task enjoyned, but till more hands
Aid us, the work under our labour grows,
Luxurious by restraint; what we by day
Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,
One night or two with wanton growth derides (8.204-11)

However, despite being a source of constant labour, the Garden in rich, plentiful, and welcoming. It is beloved by Adam and Eve, but given to their care, and the task is in fact so great that they would need more hands to aid them. Clearly the Garden was meant to sustain not only Adam and Eve but any children they should have, because reproducing is the only way they would have more hands to aid them. The purpose of mankind would be, in this context, to tend to the Garden, their home, dedicating themselves to its care every day, and that should bring them happiness, sustenance, shelter, and all they should want to satisfy their needs.

Milton's description of Eden, as it appears to Satan when he approaches, is that of a natural paradise. While in his approach he finds it "with thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild, / Access denied" (4.136-7) it contains "goodliest trees loaded with fairest fruit, / blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue / Appeared, with gay enamelled colours mixed" (4.147-9). Nature is described here with the words of jewellery or what men would consider as treasure, but it is in fact the trees and fruits and flowers that are made of gold and bright enamel. Not only that, but the overgrown, grotesque, and wild Nature itself serves to protect the Garden from Satan, and in the same time to protect Adam and Eve. The very aspect of Nature that men would seek to control, or drain, as with the marshes, or cut down, as was the case with the last of England's old-growth forests (Hiltner, 2) is the one that is meant to protect our ancestors and their home from he who would seek to destroy it, and them. The language Milton uses in regards to the Garden and natural world is not that of a controlled, carefully managed, and 'civilised' space. It is wild and overgrown, yet upon

approaching Satan is greeted by "pure now purer air" (4.153) that "to the heart inspires / Vernal delight and joy, able to drive / All sadness but despair" (4.154-6). It is not the only time that Milton links pure air with Eden. When Eve learns she must leave her native soil following the fall, she wonders "how shall we breath in other air / Less pure" (6.284-5). Eve's concern with the purity of air is all the more telling in the context of Evelyn's declaration in Fumifugium that:

> Aer that is corrupt insinuates it self into the vital parts immediately […] In a word, as the Lucid and noble Aer, clarifies the Blood, subtilises and excites it, cheering the Spirits and promoting digestion; to the dark, and grosse (on the Contrary) perturbs the Body, prohibits necessary Transpiration for the resolution and dissipation of ill Vapours, even to disturbance of the very Rational faculties, which the purer Aer does so far illuminate, as to have rendered some Men healthy and wise even to Miracle. (3)

The cleanness, wilderness and purity of the natural world, represented by Eden, stands in stark contrast to the description Evelyn gives us of the air of London, the city needing to be saved from:

> that which renders her less healthy, really offends her, and which darkens and eclipses all her other attributes. And what is all this, but that Hellish and dismall Cloud of SEA-COAL? Which is not onely perpetually imminent over her head […] but so universally mixed with the otherwise wholesome and excellent Aer, that her Inhabitants breathe nothing but an impure and thick Mist accompanied with a fulmigeanous and filthy vapour (5)

In such a context, the virtue of the air of Eden, which contains the power to drive all sadness but despair from the hearts of those who breathe it, stands as a powerful argument for an existence closer to Adam and Eve's, living in the Garden in symphony with the natural world, rather than that of the inhabitants of industrialised and civilised London. The lifestyle Milton appears to promulgate through the example of Adam and Eve is here definitely an ecological one, even if its purpose appears to be the health of humans rather than an ecological concern – although the two are closely linked.

The beneficial, if wild, aspect of Adam and Eve's natural world also stands in opposition to that of the rebellious angels following their fall from Heaven. After arriving in Hell, they set out to explore it. What they find is perhaps the most negative portrayal of any environment Milton grants us in the prelapsarian epic.

> […] through many a dark and dreary vale
> They passed, and many a region dolorous,
> Over many a frozen, many a fiery alp,
> Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death,
> A universe of death, which God by curse
> Created evil, for evil only good,
> Where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds, (2.618-24)

This desolate, inhospitable nature is as far from Eden as possible. But how can it be reconciled with the idea of Nature as good? Why would God create a place only good for evil, and so unfit for life? Firstly, it stands to reason that there are inhospitable areas on earth itself, and Milton, having allegedly travelled extensively in his youth, would been confronted with some of them. In offering us such an opposition between hospitable environments fit for human life, such as Eden, that should be tended to carefully, and inhospitable environments, which should be avoided at all costs as they are clearly the domain of evil and unfit for human life, Milton would be delivering us guidelines in our treatment of the world. That the fallen angels should encounter such darkness after falling from Heaven would additionally serve as a warning that Adam and Eve would also lose their place in Eden following their fall and be banished to less hospitable regions. The spaces that Milton describes here are mountains, fens, bogs, all places that many of his contemporaries were seeking to exploit or destroy. In fact, Bushell describes mineable mountains as "barren", perhaps in an attempt to insure nobody thinks valuable farming land is being lost (McColley, 46). In making such places evil, and for evil only good, Milton would be encouraging people to stay away from them and the

'riches' they contain. It is also worth mentioning that in the passage above nature is said to breed, and it breeds:

> Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things
> Abominable, inutterable, and worse
> Then fables have yet feigned, or fear conceived
> Gorgons and hydras and chimeras dire. (2.625-8)

How could this possibly be reconciled with something God created? Even if it is Nature that is said to breed these creatures, and would thus appear to have some sort of agency, Nature is supposed to have been created by God. This perverse Nature, good only for evil, would have to serve some sort of purpose, because it would need to be reconcilable with an omnipotent, benevolent God. There would be several explanations for such a negative portrayal. The first is related to the point defended above, and would be a warning that if some parts of the world are inhospitable and unfit for human life, it is because humans are meant to stay out of them, not decide to try to exploit them in a manner of damaging ways for materials, like iron and gold, that Milton considers to be the nerves of war. The second would be that Milton, who was well learned in Greco-Roman tradition, wished to provide an explanation for the origin of the old monsters of Greco-Roman mythology. Thirdly, it is certainly not a coincidence that it is a cohort of fallen angels passing through this evil natural world. The perversion of their surroundings would only serve to echo the perversion of the fallen cohort itself, and the monsters bred by this perverted Nature would only be an echo of the monsters bred inside the souls of the angels who turned their backs upon God and upon their own angelic nature. While Nature is described in sometimes contradictory ways, there appears to be both a message and a reasoning behind the portrayal that is given of it in *Paradise Lost*.

The ecological aspect of the poem can also be studied in regards to the anthropomorphism of Nature, and leads to the question of the agency of Nature and the

natural world in *Paradise Lost*. The language Milton uses in regards to Earth and Nature is coherent with the imagery of 'Gaia' in Greco-Roman tradition and the many works it inspired. Gaia was the Earth personified as a goddess, daughter of Chaos, mother of Ouranos (the heavens, Hesiod, *Theogony*, 146), the Titans (Hesiod, *Theogony* 173, Apollodorus 1.2, Diodorus Siculus 5.66.1), and the Cyclops (Eumelus *Titanomachia* Frag 1) (Oxford English Dictionary, Gaia (n)). According to Hesiod, she was the second being to emerge at creation (*Theogony*, 135). She was the great mother of all, the heavenly Gods being descended from her union with Ouranos, the sea-gods from her union with Pontos (Hesiod, *Theogony* 232, *Apollodorus* 1.10), Pontos, the raging sea, also being her child (Hesiod, *Theogony,* 152), the Gigantes (giants) either by Ouranos, either from her mating with Tartaros (Hesiod, *Theogony* 184, Hyginus Preface), and mortal creatures were sprung or born from her earthy flesh (for ex., Pausanias 8.25.5, Hesiod *Astronomy* Frag 4, Hyginus *Astronomica* 2.26, Alcaeus Frag 441, Hesiod *Catalogues* Frag 40A). Earth had long been described as a mothering, feminine figure, for example in Ovid's myth of Phaeton. Ovid's word for Earth is *Tellum*, the active mother of living things, the generic, the nurturer (McColley, 43). In *Paradise Lost*, Nature is shown as originating from "this wild abyss, / the womb of nature and perhaps her grave" (2.910-1). Her emerging from the wild abyss is similar to Earth emerging from chaos. As a result, Nature did not simply begin to exist by the word of God. While God is the cause of her coming into being, Nature came to be in a womb. Not only that, but Nature might die and have a grave.

In the passage where Milton describes how men "Rifled the bowels of their mother Earth" (1.687), he refers to directly to Earth as men's mother, but he also grants her bowels, and one must imagine a body, much as in Purchas's aforementioned 1619 address, where he compares the natural world to a great body, or the parts of the human body as elements of the natural world. In all of *Paradise Lost*, examples abound that Nature could be, in fact, just another character. She has "Ancestors" (2.895), there are "unaccomplished works of Nature's

hand" (3.455), "Nature wills" (4.633), Nature has a "Womb" (5.181), and can both "ordain" and "bid" (6.175-6) alongside God. She is "wise and frugal" (8.26) and in fact "from her seat / Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe" (9.782-3) when Eve eats the forbidden fruit, and when Adam follows suit, "Earth trembled from her entrails, as again / In pangs, and nature gave a second groan" (9.1000-1). There are numerous other examples within *Paradise Lost* of the anthropomorphism of Nature and Earth.

If Nature is anthropomorphised, and is described by Milton with terms most commonly used in regards to the human body, could she also be said to possess her own agency? It has been proven above that she can bring forth various elements and express character traits or emotions. However, one must ask how much agency it is possible to have in the absence of free will, and if Nature possesses free will. Throughout *Paradise Lost*, the term 'free will' is mentioned seven times. The first time it appears, some of the fallen Angels are debating upon it, amongst other notions such as providence, foreknowledge, will and fate, fixed fate, etc., in what Milton calls vain wisdom and false philosophy (2.558-65). It appears that Satan and "other powers as great" (4.63) have free will when Satan asks in his soliloquy "Hadst thou the same free will and power to stand? Thou hadst" (4.66-7). Adam is "left to his own free will" (5.236), and Eve is advised by Raphael to "take heed least passion sway / Thy judgment to do aught, which else free will / Would not admit." (8.635-6). The angels and Adam and Eve are the only characters of which it is clearly stated they possess free will, and the necessary conclusion is that Nature does not. She does, however, have wills (albeit not free) desires, and even fancies:

> […] For Nature here
> Wantoned as in her prime, and plaid at will
> Her virgin fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
> Wild above rule or art; enormous bliss. (5.294-7)

Nature, while she appears incapable of intervening directly in the events of *Paradise Lost* the way the main characters do, has emotions, desires, and is perfectly capable of suffering. She has agency to a certain point, as she can pour forth sweet wilderness and bliss according to her fancies. When Milton describes Earth as the mother of men or as the "great mother" (7.281), he enforces the point to his readers that she should be treated kindly, rather than in the way Mammon teaches his followers. Few men would treat their mother in the way the fallen angels or many men of Milton's era were treating Earth. In fact, at the time Milton was writing *Paradise Lost*, improvements in mining brought with them a language that made the earth, once the sentient mother of life, an object to be penetrated and blasted (McColley, 48). The simple fact that Nature can feel emotions and pain and so closely resembles a living character is a powerful argument in favour of treating it respectfully and kindly, which would entail behaving in an ecologically conscious way.

The final main argument in favour of reading *Paradise Lost* as an ecological text lies in the clear tendency Milton demonstrates to link ecologically damaging behaviour with the fallen angels, or demons. The principal amongst these is without a doubt mining. The damage wrought by mining is not only ecological. In his sonnet "To Sir Henry Vane the Younger," Milton calls iron and gold "war's two main nerves." (McColley, 44, footnotes). It is certainly not a coincidence that when men "Ransacked the centre, and with impious hands / Rifled the bowels of their mother Earth / For treasures better hid." (1.686-9), they do not do so on their own impetus but by the suggestion of a fallen angel, Mammon.

> Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
> From heaven, for even in heaven his looks and thoughts
> Were always downward bent, admiring more,
> The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
> Then aught divine or holy else enjoyed (1.679-83)

Not only is mining a demonic suggestion, but it is given by the least elevated spirit. Milton's apparent opposition to mining was not echoed by all his contemporaries, even

though the dangers of mining were well known to 17th century thinkers. McColley quotes (45-46) Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* (1664) in which he writes that:

> those that deal much in refining, or other works about Metalls and Minerals, have their Brains hurt and stupefi'd by the Metalline Vapours... the Spirits of Quick-silver ever file to the Skull, Teeth, or Bones... There are certain Lakes and Pits, such as that of Avernus, that poison Birds (as is said) which flie over them, or Men that stay too long about them. (202.)

Yet, Bacon still supported the exploitation of mines, as he proposed during an address to Parliament a plan to rehabilitate drowned mines in England and Wales (See Bushell: "Post-Script to the Judicious Reader" (3) following the New Atlantis in *Abridgment*). Of course, Bacon also believed that "Stones have in them fine Spirits, as appeareth by their Splendour: And therefore they may work by consent upon the Spirits of Men, to comfort and exhilarate them." (211). While it has since been proven that bright colours can, in fact, influence a person's mood, any belief in the power of stones must be held in doubt and certainly does not explain why Bacon would support the mining of metal. Even modern believers in lithotherapy tend to favour semi-precious stones, and do not use gold, silver, or iron. Milton, contrarily to Bacon, seems to believe that 'treasures better hid' ought to stay that way, despite Bacon's claim that the exploitation he encourages should be tempered by sound reason and true religion.

Mining is not the only ecologically damaging behaviour that Milton criticises in *Paradise Lost*. As Hiltner describes, when the devils approach the space from Hell to Earth, which is "a dark / Illimitable ocean without bound, / Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height, / And time and place are lost" (2.891-4) they immediately commence treating it in the same way that England was approaching "unused space" in Milton's time (15-6). They begin by dredging the ocean, much as men were draining the marshes, bogs, and fens, and then proceed to use the material gain to build a bridge. The horror of the enterprise is further reinforced when the bridge is touched by "Death with his mace petrific, cold and

dry" (10.294-5) and then, just in case it could still move or something could grow in the earth, it was "Bound with Gorgonian rigour not to move, / And with asphaltic slime; broad as the gate, / Deep to the roots of Hell the gathered beach / They fastened" (10.297-300). What Milton is describing here is rather similar to most of our contemporary cities, bound in asphalt. As to the ocean the demons view as exploitable, it serves as a barrier to protect Earth from Hell. By disregarding its reason for existing, the devils are threatening the still pristine, untouched, and beautiful Earth, not contenting themselves with Hell. After being thrown out of Heaven and into Hell, by their own fault, they would seek to "found a path / Over this maine from Hell to that new world" (10.255-7). The result is in perfect coherence of the argument presented in the previous chapter, in which the descendants of Old World peasants, having lost their place or having had it destroyed, cross over to the New World and proceed to exploit and destroy both the land and its native people. The only difference is that in *Paradise Lost*, it is the placeless demons who, having wrecked destruction in the land they were given following their fall, and bound it with chains and death, turn their sights to the newly created Earth.

Following the three arguments presented above, *Paradise Lost* certainly appears to be deeply concerned with Earth and Nature, and through its portrayal of them, can be said to be an 'ecological' text. In any case, Milton was clearly far more ecologically inclined in his writing and beliefs than many of his contemporaries. Milton's arguments on the treatment of Nature are often quite oblique. Nevertheless, the patterns of Nature's bounty towards people, the purpose of even her darker sides, to protect, or in the case of barren mountains to bring revelation (see McColley pp. 43-78) the tendency of anthropomorphism and of practically making mankind and Earth family by describing her again and again as our mother, or the clear link between demonic modes of behaviour and ill treatment of Nature, indicate that Milton's ideas might correspond to what we now call an 'ecological' outlook.

2. Nature and the Superhuman

2.1 Satan and Nature

The divine, angelic, or demonic nature of the protagonists in *Paradise Lost* is central to Milton's goal of explaining the ways of God to men and understanding *Paradise Lost* as a whole. This chapter will focus on Satan's relation to Nature and Earth, which is fundamentally different to Adam's or Eve's due to Satan's angelic nature, but also because while Eve and Adam are creatures of earth, Satan is a creature of air, the "Prince of air" (12.454). The dualistic opposition between earth and air, between Earth and Heaven, tends to view Earth as inferior and low, with Heaven and the super-sensible realm above it. This high/low opposition and the understanding of Christian desire to pull free of the physical world to be with God in a super-sensible realm can be traced back to Plato, and was first formulated by Luther (Hiltner, 35). In fact, Hiltner traces the Christian tendency to lash out in anger at the earth as a result of the theorised impossibility of accessing the super-sensible realm while still embodied on earth. However, *Paradise Lost* does not seem to align itself with traditional Christian dogma, despite presenting the intangible and elevated realm as superior to the tangible and low one. The figure of Satan is central to understanding how Milton interprets Heaven/Earth dualism. The first part of this chapter will focus on how Satan perceives place and evolves in regards to it. Then, it will focus on Hell, that Satan was intended to inhabit as a result of his banishment, and the fallen cohort's relation to this place. The final part will study the inversion of dogmatic high/low dualism in the progression of Satan throughout *Paradise Lost.*

"Better to reign in hell, then serve in heaven" (1.263) is one of Satan's most famous declarations in *Paradise Lost.* It is part of Satan's conversation with his troops and would be far more convincing were it not probable Satan was trying to persuade himself as well as his companions. Shortly beforehand, in the same address, he appears to recognise that Heaven is

in fact quite preferable to Hell, wondering if it is truly "this the region, this the soil, the clime," that he and the rest of the fallen angels "must change for heaven, this mournful gloom / For that celestial light?" (1.242, 244-5). Upon being banished from Heaven, his 'place', Satan immediately rejects the idea that the change might affect him. He states the following:

> Farewell happy fields
> Where joy for ever dwells: hail horrors, hail
> Infernal world, and thou profoundest hell
> Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
> A mind not to be changed by place or time.
> The mind is its own place, and in it self
> Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.
> What matter where, if I be still the same, (1.249-56)

Satan clearly, and somewhat involuntarily, seems to recognise that places can possess intrinsic qualities. Heaven is a happy place of everlasting joy. Hell, on the other hand, is infernal and filled with horrors. Yet Satan nevertheless claims it as his possession, announcing that he will not let himself be changed by it. But in his admission that it is preferable to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven, he does not mention if it would be preferable to reign in Heaven or reign in Hell, were the two to be considered on equal ground. In such a case, it would be clearly preferable to reign in Heaven. Between serving in Heaven or Hell, it would appear preferable to serve in Heaven. The ideas presented above should be considered all the more carefully as they are being expressed by Satan. That it is better to reign in Hell than serve in Hell sounds quite glorious, and it would seem natural for any creature to desire freedom. But Satan is in fact deceiving himself and his followers with his speech. The service he seeks to escape was by his own admission not "hard, / What could be less than to afford him praise / The easiest recompense, and pay him thanks, / How due!" (4.45-8). His choice of rebellion and his claims seem all the poorer for this admission. Satan's disregard of place would therefore be subject to the same criticism as the rest of his decisions.

Upon closer examination the second part of the quote above is just as contentious as the first. Satan claims that the mind is its own place, and that place and time hold no sway over it. In fact, he thinks, or at least says, that he can make a Heaven out of Hell, as long as he himself does not change. As Hiltner tells us, Satan is only fooling himself if he believes this to be true (Hiltner, 20). The dualist notion that the mind and body are two entirely separate entities is subject to one of the greatest difficulties faced by dualism, which is how an intangible entity can have any effect on a tangible one. Here, it is somewhat inverted as we are led to wonder if a tangible reality can have any influence on the intangible soul, or mind? Early medicine, with its idea of a porous human body, certainly thought so. Satan, despite his use of dualistic arguments, eventually realises that not only can he not change Heaven into Hell and Hell into Heaven through the power of his mind, but "Which way I fly is hell; my self am hell" (4.75). He does not control what he is, nor can he be anything he wants to be. Satan's belief that he could remain the same in Hell, or that this same was a good thing, is only a manifestation of one of his greatest flaws: pride.

However, this statement seems to contradict the idea that place does in fact have an influence on the human or superhuman psyche. It appears all the more clearly in the following quote:

> horror and doubt distract
> His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir
> The hell within him, for within him hell
> He brings, and round about him, nor from hell
> One step no more then from himself can fly
> By change of place: (4.18-23)

Satan cannot escape Hell through change of place, nor can he defeat Hell around him by the power of his mind. McColley tells us that many religious poets, including Milton, have been monist materialists who opposed dualism and the desire for transcendence, and that we cannot read their work justly, or benefit from their biopoetic wisdom, without observing that

they opposed earth-spurning thought in their theology (McColley, 67). When Satan constantly disregards and refuses to recognise the power of the places he inhabits, allowing for or participating in their destruction, or when he constantly focuses on elevating himself above everything else, including God, and encourages Eve to do the same, he is engaging in his own form of earth-spurning. His Cartesian insistence that God is untainted by corruptible matter and the human immortal soul is separable from it may seem supported by his claims he is not influenced by the places he inhabits, but in fact, it is merely a result of his disconnectedness from his surroundings, were he ever connected to earth in the first place, as a creature of air. According to my reading Milton is suggesting that it is Satan's pride, his reliance on his own power, his utter disregard for place, that is responsible for his state. Satan is not influenced by his surroundings not because of their lack of power over him, but because he gives them neither heed nor value. Zephon tells Satan, during their encounter in the Garden:

> Think not, revolted spirit, thy shape the same,
> Or undiminished brightness, to be known
> As when thou stoodst in heaven upright and pure;
> That glory then, when thou no more wast good,
> Departed from thee, and thou resemblest now
> Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul. (4.834-40)

Satan's physical appearance changes from what it was in Heaven, even if he claims his mind would never be changed by change of place. While the physical change can partly be attributed to a change in Satan's disposition, and the birth of his jealousy and pride following God's recognition of the Son, it would not explain Zephon likening him to his place of doom. That not only Satan's physical appearance changed to match his soul, but also came to resemble his place of doom, appears as a denial both of Satan's own beliefs and of Cartesian thought. Dualistic philosophy recognises the power of the intangible on the tangible, but stumbles when it comes to explaining how exactly physical substance, Descartes's *res extensa*, can be influenced by the mind, or *res cogitans.* Descartes opted to place the main 'lever' of this

interaction in the pineal gland, but there are many theories in dualism as to the manner such wildly differing substances can interact (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, dualism). But, considering Satan's fate, it would have been better for him if he could be influenced by the places he goes through, as for example the air of Eden is able to drive "all sadness but despair" (4.156) from the heart of those who breathe it. Furthermore, if he could be influenced in the first place, it is doubtful he would have fallen while in Heaven, a place of happiness and joy. Such a reading would place Satan's declaration of independence from his surroundings as one of the key elements of his fall.

After escaping the fiery pits of Hell where they have been chained, Satan's crew set about to organise and in a sense create the world they are condemned to inhabit. They "Opened into the hill a spacious wound / And digged out ribs of gold." (1.688-9). That Hell's soil contains gold is for Milton neither good nor an indication that there is anything precious to it, as he immediately warns his readers: "Let none admire / That riches grow in hell; that soil may best / Deserve the precious bane. (1.690-2). There is a great opposition between the role of gold and building in Satan's world, and in Eden. The only 'buildings' that exist in Eden are the bowers where Adam and Eve sleep (4.689-703), and those are growing, living things. There is a very close relationship with the natural world in Eden; it is omnipresent in Adam and Eve's everyday existence and gives direction to their lives. Milton writes that the Garden is "Planted, with walks, and bowers" (8.305). The fact that there is more than one bower present in the text indicates that the Garden is ready, capable, and in a way willing to sustain a greater population of humans than just Adam and Eve, thus placing them in the midst of a living ecosystem, contrarily to the devils who rip and tear apart the land of Hell to build their bridge and Pandeamonium. Pandeamonuim is described in the following terms:

> Doric pillars overlaid
> With golden architrave; nor did there want
> Cornice or freeze, with bossy sculptures graven,

The roof was fretted gold. (1.714-7)

Milton's image of Hell is the exact opposite of the one he offers us of Eden, and can also be linked to construction projects contemporary to the writing of *Paradise Lost* such as the one where Thomas Bushell proposes that Solomon "beautified thine own Temple which he built with his far sought Mineral Treasure, and I would gladly erect a house to the honor of his name." (Bushell, 12, *Abridgment* in McColley, 46). Such a grand project, decorated with mineral treasure, would far more closely resemble Pandeamonium than the bowers Adam and Eve were meant to inhabit in Eden. Additionally, such an homage to Solomon seems uncomfortably close to a manifestation of ego or of the "theology of glory" or "poetry of glory" that seems to be rejected in *Paradise Lost,* for example by the fact that the most glorious character is Satan, to the point that William Blake and other poets found him and the mindset he represented so glorious he took centre stage in their reading of the epic (McColley, 96-7). Milton makes it explicit to his readers that building great palaces and high towers is to little avail by describing how Mulciber, the architect of Pandeamonuim, is cast into Hell:

nor aught availed him now,
To have built in heaven high towers; nor did he scape
By all his engines, but was headlong sent
With his industrious crew to build in hell (1.744-51)

Many monuments Catholic Christians built as tribute to God still stand today. The Vatican itself is an example of such magnificence, as well as the world-famous Sixtine chapel. Through Pandeamonium, *Paradise Lost* criticises the pointlessness of such enterprises. The fallen angel's haste to surround themselves with high towers, beauty and riches does not change their nature in the slightest, nor does it save Mulciber from Hell. Milton makes a reproach to contemporary plans such as Bushell's with his monument to Solomon. The plan somewhat resembles the fallen angel's building of Pandeamonium as a "monument to themselves" (Hiltner, 24), and Milton's description of the fallen cohort's actions criticise any

who think engines and industry will have any use without the morals, goodness, or connectedness to place that Satan and his cohort lack. While Milton's critique is probably mostly directed at Catholic Christians, it would also be addressed to his fellow Englishmen, for example Bushell, a royalist who earned himself a letter from Charles I in June 1645 thanking him for the "manie true services you have actually done us in these times of trying a subject's loyalty" (Wroth, *Bushell, Thomas,* Dictionary of National Biography).

Finally, there are two points worth noting in regards to the air/earth and high/low dualism in *Paradise Lost*. The first is that there is a clear movement from high to low on Satan's part throughout the poem. He starts off elevated and huge is size, and by the end is crawling on the ground as a snake. The second is that Satan's 'height' is not a good thing, as it is caused by his lesser qualities. He appears high, but that height is an illusion, nothing but pride, vanity, and false appearance. There is in Satan an inversion of the usual valence of 'high' as 'good' interpretation. Shortly after breaking free from his chains, he is described in the following manner:

> Satan exalted sat, by merit raised
> To that bad eminence; and from despair
> Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
> Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
> Vain war with Heaven, (2.5-9)

This height, which Satan takes while still in Hell, lifts him beyond hope, and makes him aspire to pursue his vain war with Heaven. Clearly, it is not good, as it only encourages him in his rebellion and blinds him to the truth of the sheer foolishness of continuing war with, by his own admission, "Heavens matchless king" (4.41). In Hell, "none higher sat" than Satan. Satan is raised by "transcendent glory" (2.427) and speaks "with monarchal pride / Conscious of highest worth" (2.428-9). All these terms could give an image of Satan as elevated and glorious. But Milton's rejection of Plato's transcendentalism as well as the fact that the result of such height is a vain war and Satan's stubborn pursuit in his rebellion clearly

shows a picture of false 'elevation', an elevation based on feelings such as pride and vain aspiration. When Satan is described as "with thoughts inflamed of highest design," (2.630), the nature of these thoughts as well as their result is cast in a very interesting light. While the former is of "highest design," it ends with the punishment that "Upon thy belly grovelling thou shalt go, / And dust shalt eat all the days of thy life." (10.178-9). As McColley writes, promoters of technology are often public-spirited and even heroic, and we see by hindsight how their works grow out of control (McColley, 47). The result of Satan's "thoughts inflamed of highest design" could well have been predicted upon consideration of the basis and object of these thoughts.

As stated above, there is a progression from high to low on Satan's part throughout *Paradise Lost*, but also from low to high. As the poem starts while Satan is already in Hell, he technically moves up from that point on, all the way to Eden, before the final fall. All these descriptions of Satan as high and elevated were occurring in Hell, but there is a turning point after which Satan starts being described as increasingly low, despite moving up from Hell. While he sits in Hell, none sit higher than Satan. Yet when he tries to leave it, he is described as: "Satan from hence now on the lower stair / That scaled by steps of gold to heaven gate" (3.542-3). He goes from highest in Hell to standing on the lowest step of the stairs to Heaven. This description forms a tipping point, and Satan's duplicity only serves to bring him even lower, as after encountering Uriel, Satan is "bowing low, / As to superior spirits is wont in heaven," (3.736-7). In fact, technically, Uriel is not superior to Satan, since before his fall Satan was an Arch-Angel. But for all his pride, his plotting brings Satan to bow low. His negative sentiments of injured merit or his desire for vain war lead only to his own debasement. Other negative sentiments have the same effect, as when "Satan, now first inflamed with rage, came down," (4.9), he is constantly moving from high to low in the part of the poem after he escaped Hell. Finally, it is when he is working on causing the fall of Eve

and Adam, that he is first “Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve” (4.800) and in the end condemned in the shape of the serpent he took to tempt Eve, to eat dust for all the days of his life, slithering on his stomach.

Contrarily to traditional dualism, the height Satan possesses while in Hell is both an illusion, because he possesses it while in Hell, and a lure, because it is based on all manner of negative sentiments. Thus when he argues for the power of the mind, or speaks with monarchal pride because he is conscious of his highest worth, Satan serves as a warning against false elevation. Far from indicating that Heaven is preferable to Earth by following Satan's progression from high to low, that progression is in fact due to Satan's false elevation at the beginning and serves a warning against such types of behaviour. Satan's utter disconnectedness from Earth, his refusal to recognise or accept the power of place, isolates him and condemns him to rely on his own power, a power he claims to be of the mind and that avails him little. However, despite the apparent capacity of Satan's environment to influence him, as he comes to resemble it, he still possesses inappropriate, prideful thought while in Heaven. Perhaps this capacity to err is due to God' desire to create beings with the freedom, rather than the obligation, to be good and pure. For there to be freedom of choice, there would necessarily have to be two options to choose from, regardless of place.

2.2 Milton's Nature and his Theology

This chapter will focus on what is shown of the links between the divine and Nature in *Paradise Lost*. In the previous section, Satan's relationship with Nature was proven to be one of disregard, exploitation, and of a clearly dualist, cartesian mindset. But what of the figure of God, who is present throughout the plot and even intervenes directly? What of the figure of the Son? Hiltner argues that Milton's theology is firmly in favour of a Christianity rooted in the earth, as is demonstrated by Milton's rendition of Eve's fall as a form of uprooting (43-54). Despite heaven being elevated and high, and the Angels and other spirits being

described as creatures of air, Adam and Eve themselves are creatures of earth. However, Milton's theology does not spurn this earth in a way most religious dogma tended to spurn the physical. Instead, it appears necessary to embrace it and not seek to rise above the place mankind was meant to occupy. This section will focus on identifying and studying what role Nature and the physical play in Milton's representation of God. The first issue that will be presented will be how Nature, despite forming part of the creatures of the world, originates directly from God, and how its will can also be an extension of his will. Then, the second section will argue in favour of reading Milton's theology as placing humility, restraint and the free choice of good as the centre points of a 'Christian' approach to Nature, rather than one of exploitation which perceives Nature as being put at man's disposal. Finally, the third section will focus on outlining how Milton's monist approach makes his theology one that is not earth-spurning in the slightest.

Nature is, in *Paradise Lost*, a descendant of chaos and eldest night, who are said to be her ancestors (2.894-5). However, Nature sprung from this chaos on the word of God, as all the ingredients of chaos must apparently "ever fight / Unless the almighty maker them ordain / His dark materials to create more Worlds," (2.914-6). God can therefore be identified as the origin of Nature in *Paradise Lost*. However, following her creation, Nature appears to obtain a certain degree of freedom, as she begins to breed different creatures (2.625), not all of which are good. God himself did not create all Nature to be good, for example the "Universe of death, which God by curse / Created evil, for evil only good" (2.622-3). God did not singlehandedly create all the creatures of the universe. Many of them sprung forth from Nature herself. Simultaneously Nature is shown as possessing a prodigious wealth, which is presented for example in Eden, described as the blissful paradise of God (4.208-9). These two aspects of Nature may first appear to be conflicting, and are echoed by many contradictions throughout the text. In order to understand the apparent duality of Nature, which produces

both much richness and goodness yet also monstrous and vile things, it is important to understand why God would allow for evil in the first place. God himself answers this question in his address to the Son in Book III, when he claims that:

> I formed them free, and free they must remain,
> Till they enthral themselves: I else must change
> Their nature, and revoke the high decree
> Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
> Their freedom, they themselves ordained their fall. (3.124-8)

In this passage, and in fact throughout the whole address, God explains to the Son that he did create all his creatures, including mankind and all the ethereal powers and spirits, which is to say Satan also, just and right, sufficient to have stood, though free to fall (3.98-101). Freedom and free will are apparently central to God's creation, as without them, his creatures would have absolutely no credit in choosing good over evil. But in order for his creatures to have the choice of choosing good, of choosing God, he must also present them with another choice. This would explain, in Milton's view, why God allowed for the existence of evil, and why Nature itself generates things that are not necessarily good. In Milton's theology, evil itself serves the purpose of generating a much greater good than would have been possible had there not been evil. Such arguments were not uncommon previously to the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, which inspired great changes in theodicy due to the incapacity of many contemporary philosophers and theologians to argue it was somehow for the greater good, as is demonstrated for example in works by Mark Molesky, Susan Neiman, or Theodore Braun. Whether it is God's wisdom that is being praised which "had ordained / Good out of evil to create" (7.187-8) or whether it is in Adams exclamation of "O goodness infinite, goodness immense! / That all this good of evil shall produce, / And evil turn to good." (12.469-71), it appears that even evil serves the purpose of good, and of God, be it through the actions of Satan, Adam and Eve, or Nature herself.

As has been shown, Nature creates her own works in a manner that seems independent from the Father. She was brought forth not from nothingness upon the word of God, but from chaos and darkness. However, according to McColley, the chaos from which Nature was brought forth was the own substance of God, from which he had previously withdrawn his ordering will (60). If all substance is part of God, then the physical substance that surrounds us was not created from nothingness at God's command, but was created from God himself. Nature is therefore a part of God, originating directly from his own being, which further proves the monistic nature of Milton's theology. This is made even more evident in the following description:

> Thee Father first they sung Omnipotent,
> Immutable, Immortal, Infinite,
> Eternal King; thee Author of all being,
> Fountain of Light, thy self invisible (3.372-5)

If God is infinite, then Nature cannot exist outside or independently from God, for if God did not contain Nature, including its physical aspect, then God would not be infinite, and would not be God. This ontological argument as to the nature of God is first credited to Anselm of Canterbury in his 1078 *Proslogion,* in English often called *Discourse on the Existence of God,* and although highly controversial, is clearly monist in that it erases the barrier between the spiritual and the physical by making them both part of an infinite God. Any ideology based on an earth-spurning platonic tendency to look away from any place on earth towards the perfect forms of objects or towards concepts such as Justice, Truth, Good, in the wondrous invisible world of classical Christian dualism would, in spurning the physical, be spurning part of God himself. Simply being a monistic text would make *Paradise Lost* ecologically friendly since Earth is not rendered worthless as opposed to another, metaphysical realm. Therefore, it is also of little importance who created what or what it was created from, to a lesser extent, as all is part of God. Milton wrote that God:

From the pure Empyrean where he sits
High Throned above all high, bent down his eye,
His own works and their works at once to view: (3.56-8)

It is clear here that God did not create everything, but even the works of the others were created from God himself, which also explains how creatures and Nature can generate life without generating creatures 'independently' from God. Earth is described as 'self-balanced' (7.242) and can therefore apparently also exist independently from God. As for God, despite his appearance in *Paradise Lost*, he is described as 'invisible' and as being a 'fountain of light'. To harm the physical world would be to harm God himself. The monistic nature of *Paradise Lost* is rendered all the more evident in the following passage:

O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return,
If not depraved from good, created all
Such to perfection, one first matter all,
Indued with various forms, (5.469-73)

Here, the Archangel clearly refers to God as the one first matter from whom all things proceed, including the physical. This means that all created beings, from ants to subterranean stones, are diversified from the same living material (McColley, 70). This adds a vitalist influence to the monism previously perceived in the text. The "vital virtue" (7.236) that God infused in the beginning in all things that live continues to be and refines the differentiated forms of Creation. In Milton's theology, God would not be a deity standing outside and separate from his creation. He would be in all his creatures and all the world would be of divine provenance, thus defeating the Christian disdain for the physical in favour of the metaphysical. If even our own corruptible matter is of godly provenance, then there is no need to scorn it. Additionally, the forms described here are not Plato's perfect forms which exist only in the metaphysical world and all things on earth only vaguely resemble. Rather, it

appears that each and every form Milton's God sends out on earth is 'such to perfection' if 'not depraved from good' rather than the pale, imperfect imitations of Plato's philosophy.

In the previous section, it was said that in *Paradise Lost*, being highly placed is not necessarily a good thing, and that glory could be very well associated with Satan. God in Heaven is also described as 'high throned,' and in fact 'above all high.' Another trait much associated with Satan is glory, which made Satan take centre stage for poets such as William Blake. Glory is however a trait associated not only with Satan, but with God and with the Son, for at God's side: "The radiant image of his Glory sat, / His onely Son;" (3.63-4). This presentation of God as all high and glorious is a problematic one considering Milton was a Protestant. Hiltner argues that one of Luther's main issues with the Catholic church was that it had become a "theology of Glory" which "expects God to be revealed in strength, glory and majesty, and is simply unable to accept the scene of dereliction on the cross as the self-revelation of God." Additionally, the Catholic church appeared to have forgotten God's words to Paul, that "my [God's] strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Luther's "theology of the cross" focused instead on the abject scene of Christ on the cross, bringing the power and strength of the Christian faith forth from utter weakness (Hiltner, 79-80). One of the many apparent contradictions in *Paradise Lost* is precisely that Milton, despite his depiction of God as glorious and grand and Heaven as full of high towers and wonderful works, appears to support Luther's theology of the cross. In his address to the Son, after the Son has declared he will sacrifice himself for man, God extolls the virtues of goodness and humility, above being great or high:

> Found worthiest to be so by being good,
> Far more then great or high; because in thee
> Love hath abounded more then glory abounds,
> Therefore thy humiliation shall exalt
> With thee thy manhood also to this throne;
> Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign

Both God and Man, Son both of God and Man, (3.310-6)

There are several key points to Milton's theology outlined in this passage. The first is that the Son shall sit incarnate upon the Throne of Heaven, which means he shall sit upon it 'in the flesh.' As such, the physical itself shall be present in Heaven, which can therefore no longer serve as a perfect metaphysical world to which Christians shall be elevated after losing their physical shells. God does however not stop there. He goes on to say that the Son shall reign as both Son of God and Son of Man, both God and Man. It is not just the metaphysical and the physical that are being joined in this extract, but mankind and the divine. In order to understand *Paradise Lost* as supporting the theology of the cross and not a theology of glory, it is necessary to note that though the Son's manhood shall be exalted with him to the Throne, it would be only through the humiliation of the Son upon the cross and because love abounded in the Son more than glory did. If the Son is found so worthy, it is because he was good, not because he was great or high, because he cared more for love than glory, and because he showed humility by accepting his death on the cross. These are the virtues Milton extols in *Paradise Lost*, not Satan's high-minded dualism and his utter disdain for the world surrounding him. The points outlined above illustrate Hiltner's claim for the environmental import of the *theologia crucis* of the young Luther. The tendency, first in Plato, then in institutionalised Christianity, to look at, then move away from places on the Earth, is replaced by a God who is manifestly physical. There would therefore be less of a tendency to turn away from earth and nature, resulting in an 'ecologically friendly' form of Christianity.

It is not only the theology of glory that is rejected in *Paradise Lost*, but the whole institution of the Catholic Church. Milton goes so far as to include a burning critique of the behaviour of 'devout' Catholic Christians in his epic poem. He begins by accusing pilgrims of seeking “In Golgotha him dead, who lives in Heaven;” (3.477). This first criticism of Catholic practices is further reinforced later in the same passage, when Milton describes how those

who "Dying put on the weeds of Dominic, / Or in Franciscan think to pass disguised;" (3.478-9) will first appear to be let into Heaven, but at the moment they try to begin the ascent into Heaven:

> A violent cross wind from either coast
> Blows them transverse ten thousand leagues awry
> Into the devious air; then might ye see
> Cowls, hoods and habits with their wearers tossed
> And fluttered into rags, then relics, beads,
> Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,
> The sport of winds: all these upwhirled aloft (3.487-93)

Many of the objects being tossed around by the wind are at the heart of the Reformation's argument against the Catholic Church. Understandably, the idea that one could buy indulgences from the Pope in order to get into Heaven regardless of one's sins would not be very compatible with any truly Christian thought. Milton shows the same disdain for holy objects, which were worshipped by the Catholic Church. He does not, however, do so out of disdain for the physical. His scorn for relics would rather be linked to his critique of seeking Christ in Golgotha while he lives in Heaven. Additionally, there would be for a monist no point in forming an attachment to particular pieces of wood just because they were part of the cross of the Christ, considering that, according to monism, God is everywhere and is part of everything. For Milton especially, all matter was brought forth from God and as such, is precious.

The role of Nature in Milton's theology is therefore deeply connected to God through the vitalist monistic nature of *Paradise Lost*. In portraying Nature as part of God himself, despite its self-generating aspect, Milton opens the way for a theology much closer to Nature which would not lead to Christians constantly scorning the world around them and in fact inflicting violence on it, out of a desire to be with God in a metaphysical world. Likewise, the *theologia crucis* would also play an important role upon man's management of the natural

world. By creating a theology which scorns such things as glory, power and great works, and instead asks for goodness and humility and love, *Paradise Lost* would be arguing for a simpler way of life, which would not have men placing themselves as Gods over Nature, seeking to subjugate it in the way Satan's army does when building Pandemonium. The Miltonic ideal would rather be to live a simple, humble life in harmony with Nature, much as Adam and Eve are doing in the Garden. God may be described many times throughout the text as great, high, almighty, etc., but such discourse is mitigated first by his address to the Son, in which the virtues of goodness, humility and love are extolled, and secondly because of his divine nature. God is great, and high, because he is God. Being infinite makes him such that nothing bigger or greater can be imagined, because if it could, he would not be infinite and therefore he would not be God. However, other figures present in *Paradise Lost*, such as Satan, will ultimately always be lost by trying to rise as high as God or be greater then they were meant to be. Instead, as Adam realises, it is "by small / Accomplishments great things, by things deemed weak / Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise / By simply meek" (12.566-9) that Christians shall be able to achieve anything. By denouncing the search of power over others, over themselves, and over Nature, and asking Christians to simply accept their place in the world, *Paradise Lost* delivers a message that, if heeded, might have helped prevent much of the ecological crises of Milton's time and of today.

3. Nature and Mankind in *Paradise Lost*

3.1 A Gendered Nature: Eve and Nature in Adam's world

This chapter will first focus on identifying the dynamic between Adam, Eve and Nature in *Paradise Lost.* It will study how the anthropocentric idea of Nature being created for mankind might influence the mankind/natural world dynamic. Then, the second part of the chapter will focus on Eve's relation to Nature, in order to determine if and how it differs from Adam's. So far, it appears that Nature is a feminine entity in *Paradise Lost,* following most traditional portrayals. This part will therefore seek to determine whether Eve's nature is closer to Nature than Adam's, not only because of the feminine aspect of Nature but also because Eve, being removed from Adam's rib rather than fashioned directly by God, is one step further yet from the heavenly, and one step closer to earth, than Adam himself. Additionally, Eve's assigned task in regards to Adam is quite similar to that of Nature in regards to Adam, as she was created for God but also for Adam. The final part of the chapter will study Eve and Adam's 'role' in regards to Nature. As seen in the previous sections, Nature is influenced by the developments present throughout the epic, has will and desires, creates, and as shall be seen below, even interacts with individual characters. However, we should expect that Adam and Eve, as creatures made of clay and raised from dust, should be even more closely linked to Nature and Earth than creatures of air such as Satan or other heavenly spirits. Perhaps the best argument in favour of such a reading lies in the description of Adam and Eve's home, the Garden of Eden, in contrast to Heaven or Hell. Adam and Eve's connection to Nature in the Garden is practically symbiotic, as shall be demonstrated below. This symbiotic relationship will lead to the idea of *genius loci*, which Hiltner uses to describe the role played by Adam but especially Eve in the theology of *Paradise Lost*.

While up until this point *Paradise Lost* has appeared to give great importance to Nature and the physical, thus giving justification to its reading as an ecological text, the section investigating Adam's link to Nature might be more contentious. It is rather commonly accepted in Christian thought that the world was created for Man, and that he is to subdue it and hold dominion over it. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan is the first character who mentioned that Earth was created for man when he deplored that God, instead of caring for the fallen cohort, "out-cast, exiled, his new delight, / Mankind created, and for him this world." (4, 105-7). At this point in the text this statement could still be held in doubt, considering it is Satan speaking and he is not renowned for his sound judgment but rather for his poor decision making. The following extract, in which God is addressing the Son, puts the concept of Earth and Nature as at man's disposal beyond reasonable doubt.

> Let us make now man in our image,
> Man in our similitude, and let them rule
> Over the fish and fowl of sea and air,
> Beast of the field, and over all the earth,
> And every creeping thing that creeps the ground.
> ...
> Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth,
> Subdue it, and throughout dominion hold
> Over fish of the sea, and fowl of the air,
> And every living thing that moves on the earth. (7.519-34)

Clearly, the world does belong to mankind, as mankind is destined to rule, subdue, and hold dominion over every creature. This makes an ecological reading of *Paradise Lost* difficult, as it appears to justify a rhetoric of exploitation based upon the creation of Earth and Nature at man's disposal. It is possible, however, to argue that Nature and all living things being created as subordinate to man does not mean man should slaughter animals and destroy the natural world. The prelapsarian Garden instead demonstrates a symbiotic relationship between Man and Nature, be it in the previously mentioned living, growing bowers or in the

way that the fruits a prelapsarian Adam and Eve eat for dinner were fruits "which the compliant boughs / Yielded them" (4.332-3). In fact, whether man should eat meat or not was an ongoing debate since Antiquity, with certain thinkers, such as Plutarch, defending that those who think men are meat-eaters by nature should slay their prey with their own hands and teeth and eat it alive, rather than disguising it with cooking and sauces (McColley, 178). McColley reminds us that the voice from the Whirlwind in the Book of Job (38-41) "delivers a stunning rebuke to the presumption that animals were created only for our use" (McColley, 181). In fact, Job's advice to his friends is the following: "Ask the beasts, and they shall teach thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?" (Job 12.7-9; Plate 9). This seemingly effortless communication between mankind and animals and even Man and Nature, as the earth is also said to speak, is quite reminiscent of the effortless prelapsarian bond Eve and Adam possessed with the land and creatures of Eden. Rather than Adam and Eve exploiting the Earth, or possessing it, or disposing of it, they turn towards it and its creatures as a teacher. This dynamic is further explored in *Paradise Lost* by the promise that if man remains obedient, and does not seek knowledge beyond what his happy state can comprehend, he may yet ascend to Paradise (5.497-709). Adam and Eve should therefore content themselves from what knowledge they can glean from their status in Eden. Additionally, the bond between student and teacher is supposed to be such that the student owes respect to the teacher. Milton appears to go even farther than suggesting that mankind does not only owe respect to and can learn from Nature. It is in fact their duty to tend to it, as is shown below:

> But let us ever praise him, and extol
> His bounty, following our delightful task
> To prune these growing plants, and tend these flowers,
> Which were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet. (4.436-9)

Adam and Eve are the world's first gardeners. They are not there to exploit the Garden and the animals do not fear them. They live in harmony with them, and no mention is made of killing them, only that mankind shall hold full dominion over them. Even when Raphael descends to deliver God's warning about Satan, and he dines with Adam and Eve on “viands” and “meats” (5.434; 451), they are in fact eating acorns and fruits, "all Autumn piled" (5.394). In Old English, these two words used to signify food in general (Online Etymology Dictionary). Both terms were used since circa 1300 to signify flesh used as food, but Milton uses them in the older sense. This is confirmed a few verses later when Adam refers to Raphael as having tasted “these earthly fruits” (5.465). In any case, the state of Adam and Eve in a prelapsarian Nature is one of careful balance, and of symbiosis both with the plants and animals, as they used to not flee man but stand in awe of him, which is no longer the case following the fall (9.710). The “compliant boughs” (4.332) are now gone, as Adam must order the pines to “cover me” (9.1087) rather than being naturally shielded much as Eve was by a “cloud of fragrance” (9.425) shortly before the fall.

Despite Milton's belief that all things descend from “one first matter all, / Indued with various forms, various degrees / of substance” (5.472-4), even the prelapsarian epic suggests pulling away from Earth. Milton’s Raphael tells Adam that if he and Eve remain faithful, “Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit, / Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend / Ethereal” (5.497-9). The material world is apparently not equal to the immaterial one, despite the monistic nature of Milton's theology. However, Adam and Eve's link to nature remains one of gentle care. They are creatures of earth, as they were formed “from the dust” (5.516), and they do not find their work hard, nor do they exploit the Earth. Although Eve makes it very clear that tending to the Garden is "labour" (9.205, 8, 14)), and a "task" (9.207, 21) or "work" (9.224) while supper must be "earned" (9.225), the task remains a pleasant one (9.207). Much as Satan's service in Heaven was, by his own admission, not hard, neither is Adam's

and Eve's work in the Garden. It is only as part of Adam's sentence following the fall that mention is made of plowing the earth, and eating the "herb of the field / In the sweat of thy face" (10.204-5). It appears that agriculture was, at least in *Paradise Lost,* a postlapsarian undertaking. While mentioned is made of pruning, tending, etc., nothing is said of tilling, plowing, and no mention is made of the 'herb of the field' in the prelapsarian world. The ecological damage that was being dealt due to the draining of marshes for agriculture described in the first chapter of this work would explain this shift from a naturally bountiful and symbiotic prelapsarian link to Nature to a postlapsarian one where Adam and Eve seem alienated from the Nature they were meant to hold dominion over and tend to.

Eve's relationship to Nature appears rather closer than the one Adam enjoys. To begin with, Nature and Earth are consistently portrayed as female throughout *Paradise Lost*, as we have seen above. Secondly, Eve is one step further removed from God in respect to Adam. Adam was created "for God only, she for God in him" (4.299). While these observations must be carefully considered, seeing as they are being made by Satan, it is clear that Eve was created from Adam himself. Milton does not tell us Eve was created to serve Adam, but only God in Adam. Her role is nevertheless similar to that of Nature, as she was created for Adam, much as this world was. Nature plays a very important role for Eve. While she was fashioned exactly to Adam's "heart's desire" (7.1088) she was formed by God himself, from the "rib he formed and fashioned with his own hands" (7.1106). Yet when Eve appears in *Paradise Lost* it is often in connection with Nature. Eve is firstly described as "Nature's desire" (5, 45), not Adam's desire, and the Angel tells Adam in regards to his description of Eve as too lovely "Accuse not Nature, she has done her part" (8.561). Finally, her behaviour is firmly set as a result of Nature when it is described that "Nature herself, though pure of sinful thought, / Wrought in her so, that seeing me, she turned" (8.506-7). While Eve was formed by God himself to Adam's hearts desire it is consistently Nature that is responsible for her character,

for her appearance, and for her general behaviour. When God's hand in her creation is mentioned, it is in regard to her better qualities, for example when she is called: "Daughter of God and man, accomplished Eve" (4.660) or "Daughter of God and man, immortal Eve" (8.291). This duality creates an interesting schism within Eve, who appears to owe her character in part to God, but also in part to Nature. It is not entirely clear whether the Nature being spoken of is Eve's nature or Nature itself. In both cases, Milton would still blaming Nature (or nature) for Eve's less elevated characteristics. Additionally, if Nature in the larger sense wrought Eve in a certain way, then she is responsible for Eve's nature. It would make little sense to speak of Eve's nature in the way Nature is being spoken of in the aforementioned passages, because that would suggest both that her nature preexisted Eve, and that her nature is independent from Eve. This might be the case, but the most likely conclusion is that the Nature being spoken of is, indeed, Nature. While God is at the root of her accomplishment and her immortality, it is made very clear in the Angel's words that Nature should not be blamed for Eve's less commendable characteristics, which is not to say she is not responsible. Nature did play a role in Eve's character, but perhaps she could hardly have played another. As seen in the previous chapter, Nature does not appear to have free will in the way Satan, Adam, or Eve do. Additionally, to assume that Eve was created in any other way than exactly as God wanted would be to assume that God was not all-powerful, and if God was not all-powerful, then he would not be God. The link between Nature and Eve's character in *Paradise Lost* does not absolve God of blame for any of the events of the fall, though some of Milton's other arguments may pursue that purpose.

Eve appears to share a particularly strong link to flowers. She is described as the “fairest unsupported flower (9.432) when Satan is spying on her in the Garden, and is also tending to the flowers “gently” as she “upstays” them, all the while being “mindless” of herself (9.430-1). This lack of regard for herself shows a very mothering side of Eve in regards to Nature, who

in turn shields her from the eyes of the fiend. The importance of the fragrance of the flowers Eve is tending to is all the more relevant because, at the time Milton was writing *Paradise Lost* unclean air was quite an important issue, as discussed by Evelyn. In part III of Fumifugium, Evelyn turns to grass roots remedies for air pollution: he recommends the planting of a green belt and the cultivation of private gardens with fragrant and air-cleansing plants, which is "Eve's exemplary task" (McColley, 84). Eve's place in a world created for mankind is closer to Earth through her nature, yet contrarily to Adam she was not created from dust but rather from one of his ribs.

Two opposing implications could be drawn from the story of Eve's creation. The first is that she is further from the Earth, as she was not created directly from it, and this distance could have precipitated her fall as she forgot who and what she was, and tried to ascend to the metaphysical. The second is that, being created from Adam, she is further from God and closer to Nature. Satan wonders, in regards to the physical world, "what God after better worse would build?" (8.103). This was a controversial issue in the seventeenth century, and the same question can be asked of Adam and Eve. It is demonstrated quite clearly that in their physical state, they are inferior to certain metaphysical beings, despite not being the "least" (3.277) of God's creations. Satan would therefore be mistaken in his statement that God would not create worse after better. A better interpretation would lie in the idea that as all creation descends from God, then all creation is as it was meant to be, including Eve and Nature. Eve's nature is shown ever closer to that of the Earth when the Earth is described as the "great mother" (7.281) while Eve is the "mother of mankind" (1.36). Eve's role as a mother is only reinforced by being referred to as such in her first appearance in *Paradise Lost*. Even in her postlapsarian lament upon having to leave the Garden, both Eve's close link to Nature in Eden and her motherly nature are demonstrated when she reveals that she gave names to the flowers that she bred up with tender hands (11.276-7).

The role played by Adam, but especially Eve, in tending to the Garden and the Earth, is therefore harmonious and symbiotic, based on mutual care and temperance. Adam and Eve are never encouraged to neglect or scorn the physical, even following the Fall. While Nature is decidedly more hostile in the postlapsarian world, and appears perverted from her gentle, if wild, portrayal, Adam and Eve must still toil the Earth and strive to build themselves a new home, though now Paradise shall be within them, if they are able to:

> onely add
> Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add faith,
> Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,
> By name to come called charity, the soul
> Of all the rest: (12.581-5)

In precipitating the Fall, Eve allowed for several elements to appear. The first is that, while Satan is not able to "make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven" using merely the power of his mind, Adam and Eve are able to carry Paradise within them by demonstrating goodness and Christian values, through their actions and the qualities they demonstrate. The second is that "evil shall turn to good, more wonderful / Than that which by creation first brought forth" (12.471-2). By giving the power to carry Paradise within themselves to Adam and Eve due to qualities they demonstrate and denying it to Satan who thinks he can attain it through the power of his mind, *Paradise Lost* shows a theology in which the physical Adam and Eve gain redemption while a 'superior' being, created capable of standing, like all the ethereal beings, does not. By giving more importance to the inherent qualities of Adam and Eve rather than to their physical nature, the importance of 'true' Christian values is shown as superior to the physical or metaphysical nature of the characters in question. As a result, it becomes more important for Milton's Christians to show virtues such as temperance, love, and charity then to try to somehow scorn and punish their physical bodies, or the physical world that surrounds them. Eve and Adam treasure the Earth and the Garden. Satan, despite

trying to tear Eve from the Garden, despises the physical nature he is forced to adopt in order to tempt Eve. He deplores how

> I who erst contended
> With Gods to sit the highest, am now constrained
> Into a beast, and mixed with bestial slime,
> This essence to incarnate and imbrute, (7.163-6)

This binding of Satan to the snake is the most unnatural event in *Paradise Lost* and highlights the difference between Adam and Eve, who live quite happily in Eden in their physical forms, inhabiting a physical world, tending to it, yet being promised the possibility to gently ascend to a higher plane, and Satan, who claims he is 'constrained' to bind himself to the snake. Satan is quite obviously forced to do no such thing. It is his own desire for revenge and jealousy that motivates him. Again, the qualities of Satan's character appear to have much more influence upon his fate than whether he is in a physical or ethereal state. One can draw the conclusion that Man should not try to pull away from the earth or surpass his own limitations, nor should he try to reason his way into happiness the way Satan tries to reason himself into believing he can make a Heaven of Hell. Instead *Paradise Lost* shows a state of symbiosis between the metaphysical and the physical, mankind and Nature, Adam and Eve. It is not by chance that Eve is likened to a "vine" (4.307). The image of the woman as a vine and the man as an oak or elm is quite common in seventeenth century literature, as has been studied for example by Peter Demetz in "The Elm and the Vine: Notes toward the History of a Marriage Topos." In *Paradise Lost,* it serves to indicate the ideal relationship between Adam and Eve, much as the vine is led:

> To wed her elm; she spoused about him twines
> Her marriageable arms, and with her brings
> Her dower the adopted clusters, to adorn
> His barren leaves. (5.215-9)

Adam and Eve need each other much as the vine and elm do. They are in symbiosis with each other, not only with Nature, and are clearly not meant to be separated. It is certainly not a coincidence that when Satan spies Eve alone he considers her as an unsupported flower. Eve's task in regards to Nature and the Garden, despite the differences in their nature, appears much the same as Adam's. She is to tend, nurture, and has a burden of care for the Garden and animals. Eve is however more often likened to Nature due to their statuses as mothers.

Ken Hiltner argues that the symbiotic link between mankind and Nature in *Paradise Lost* is quite to similar to the idea of *genius loci* in some of Milton's earlier works. Both the vocabulary with which Milton describes Eve as well as her assigned role within the Garden makes her resemblance to such 'spirits of place' difficult to ignore. Hiltner's argument is partly based on the figure of Sabrina from *A Masque at Ludlow Castle* and he claims that:

> ... although in the *Mask* we can see Milton laying the groundwork of the Human-Earth relationship, as *genius loci* (which will directly develop into *Paradise Lost's* Eve), the *Mask* offers a vision of how humans are to work towards regaining Paradise: by becoming protective spirits of the specific place on Earth where we dwell. (60)

The idea of Adam and Eve as spirits of place is rooted in their clear symbiosis with the Garden and the natural world, as well as their assigned role as its caretakers. Eve and Adam do not merely live in a world created for their use. They have a responsibility to it that can be likened to that of parent and child. When Eve laments the loss of her place in Eden, she wonders what will happen to the plants as she asks "Who shall now reare ye to the sun?" (11.287). Her worry is not merely for Adam and herself, despite them being the ones who must leave. It also appears that while Earth was wounded by the fall of Adam and Eve, she is also being punished for their fault as she will be left without a caretaker. Thus, the careful balance of the Garden is broken. Adam and Eve must leave, but their leaving shall harm the Garden itself.

The portrayal of Adam and Eve as spirits of place, or *genius loci,* is however somewhat complicated by certain passages of *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity,* written in 1629 and usually referred to as the *Nativity Ode*. Upon the coming of Christ,

> From haunted spring and dale
> Edged with poplar pale,
> The parting Genius is sighing sent,
> With flower-inwoven tresses torn
> The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn. (184-8)

The co-habitation of pagan and Christian within the poem is reminiscent of Milton's knowledge and respect of the classics allied with his being a devout Christian. It appears that in this work Christianity is the victor, as the *genii*, with their flower-inwoven tresses reminiscent of Adam and Eve's own appearance, are described as being banished from their homes. Some readings have concluded that the purging of idols in the last stanzas of the hymn suggest modern reformation (Lewalski 48). However, if the role of the genius is the *Nativity Ode* matches that of Adam and Eve as *genius loci,* then this forced separation of the spirits would appear to deprive Nature of the care and attention Adam and Eve provide it, simultaneously leaving it unprotected. This would destabilise Hiltner's attempt to characterise Eve as a spirit of place. Nature, however, does not appear to deplore the coming of Christ. While she does "hide her guilty front with innocent snow" (39) she also "sympathises" with her "great master" (34) and is "in awe" (32) of him. Nature is described as "wanton" (36), "pollute with sinful blame" (41) and possessing "foul deformities" (44). The sinful blame Nature is polluted with is a result of her sins as a consequence of Adam and Eve's Original Sin. Much as, in *Paradise Lost,* Nature accompanied Adam and Eve in their fall, her shame and guilty front in the *Nativity Ode* is due to her faults, certainly, but those faults are due to Adam and Eve's original fault. This would be why, the Earth, upon having her protector and caretakers (the *genii*) soon be ripped from her, appears to rejoice. Rather than reacting with increased wilderness the

way she does after the fall of Adam and Eve, which brings about "snow and haile and stormie gust and flaw" (9.698), the "wild winter" of the beginning of the poem grows calm (29), and:

> The Winds with wonder whist,
> Smoothly the waters kissed,
> Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,
> Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
> While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave. (64-8)

The banishment of the old pagan gods is eclipsed by the coming of Christ and the wildness of Nature, which began with the fall of Adam and Eve, appears to be somewhat tamed. Unfortunately the peace present from lines 46-156 is not to be until after "the worlds last session" (162). Yet, preceding the banishment of the pagan gods, the *Nativity Ode* tells us that the healing of the imbalance caused by the Fall:

> But now begins; for from this happy day
> Th' old Dragon under ground,
> In straiter limits bound,
> Not half so far casts his usurped sway,
> And wrath to see his Kingdom fail,
> Swindges the scaly Horrour of his foulded tail. (167-72)

Yet despite the happiness of the day, if the pagan gods are banished, Earth now finds herself with no *genius loci* to tend to her. This is precisely when the role of Adam and Eve, or their descendants, *as genius loci* becomes most important. Hiltner presents the argument that "Milton took the attributes of the pagan *genius loci* and used them to develop his Adam and Eve as "spirits of place"" (Hiltner 52). By banishing the old pagan gods in the *Nativity Ode*, Milton is creating a theology in which mankind *must* become *genius loci* lest Nature find herself stripped of care and protection. If Adam and Eve were originally intended to be the *genius loci* but were alienated from Nature following the Fall, then the coming of Christ and the banishing of the old gods and the *genii* is nothing else but the first step to the descendants of Adam and Eve regaining their proper place as caretakers of the Natural world. If the old Dragon's, which is to say the Satan's (Revelation 12:9) loss of power at the arrival of Christ is

what allows for the banishment of the pagan gods, then it is also that loss of power which would allow for the wound caused to Nature when first Eve, then Adam, ripped away from it to begin healing.

Karen Edwards tells us that demons were perceived in the seventeenth century as having the advantage over human beings in understanding occult causes. She also reminds us that Thomas Browne in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* writes that "many secrets there are in nature of difficult discovery unto man, of easie knowledge unto Satan" (*PE*, 63), causing natural magicians to resort to the aid of demons when the attempt to understand and manipulate the occult virtues of Nature became too frustrating (24). Following the passage in *Paradise Lost* indicating this world was created for mankind, it wouldn't be logical for Satan to have a better understanding of it. However, if one were to read the interpretation of the Fall as a movement away from Nature, then it would explain how Satan, after binding himself to bestial slime, could have gained part of that which Adam and Eve lost. The coming of the son and the banishment of the pagan gods would allow for this inversion to begin being righted. In *Paradise Lost*, the stage is set for the arrival of the pagan gods when Eve asks the plants who will rear them to the sun after she is gone. This would allow for the hypothesis that following the Fall, the space left open by Eve's being ripped away from Nature was filled by the *genius loci.* But the balance of nature is not righted until mankind regains the place Eve, then Adam, lost.

The consequences of regaining mankind's original role as spirits of place would be many. To begin with, it would allow for them to return to the task God originally intended for them to fulfil. In *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve are promised that if they continue tending to the Garden, and learning about their place and themselves, they might at last turn all to spirit, and winged ascend, ethereal. This promise is what is regained upon the banishment of the old gods in the *Nativity Ode*. Nature is not in fact stripped of her protectors, but rather

opened to the possibility of regaining her lost link to Adam and Eve through their descendants, and perhaps recovering from the "wound" (8.782) she sustained upon the Fall. Nevertheless, Nature without *genius loci* would undoubtedly be far more vulnerable. Hiltner argues that without roots into the earth, we are powerless (65). He also claims that it is "almost passé to talk about "saving the earth"" (59) implying that we are rather the ones in need of saving. As we have seen, the balance of the Garden in *Paradise Lost* is rather one of co-dependence. Eve needs Nature. Whether Nature needs Eve is less certain. By banishing the old pagan gods, Milton makes it imperative that mankind take its place in tending the Earth, in order to ensure its own salvation. *Paradise Lost* emphasises the importance of virtues such as temperance, gentleness and caring when dealing with Nature. Reading the fall of Adam and Eve as the destruction of this symbiotic relationship with Nature shows *Paradise Lost* as of great significance to ecological literature, and further illustrates the opposition of the devastation wrought by the arrival of industry and the destruction of forests with the prelapsarian state of mankind in the Garden. However, it also appears that the object of ecological thought in the poem is never quite so much oriented at Nature, but remains anthropocentric, which undermines the ecological tone of the poem.

3.2 Human and Nature in a Postlapsarian World

This final section will focus on what *Paradise Lost* shows us of the postlapsarian state of affairs between Nature and of mankind, as well as the condition of Nature following the fall. Before, Adam and Eve lived in the Garden, in harmony with Nature, and with a duty to care for the plants and ensure the continued well-being of the place they were given dominion over. Yet postlapsarian Nature seems much more dangerous, and quite imperfect. When Adam glances into the future, he sees how different events (e.g. the flood) influence the course of mankind. He also sees the tremendous power and danger of natural events, despite their being due to the will of God. The corruption of Nature was an important element of

seventeenth century thought, as shown for example through Godfrey Goodman's *The Fall of Man or the Corruption of Nature* (1616), or George Hakewill's *An Apologie of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World* (1627). William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon, co-editors of *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, call the corruption and decay of Nature "an important seventeenth-century debate" (215) in their introduction to Milton's Latin poem *Naturam non pati senium.* There is a critical consensus that the works of Hakewill and Goodman were known to Milton, as can be seen in Carey (64), Haan (150- 52), or McCullough. How can this be reconciled with an idea of a perfect Nature made for man? Much time has been spent up to this chapter analysing the role of Nature within the poem as well as in regards to the different protagonists. But what should be understood through usage of the term Nature? Where does Milton's idea of Nature stand within the numerous meanings that can be given to Nature and the numerous elements the word 'nature' can convey?

In order to answer these questions, an attempt will be made to understand Milton's Nature within Kate Soper's identification of two separate ideologies, one 'nature-endorsing' and one 'nature-sceptical' in her book *What is Nature: Culture, Politics and the Non-Human*. In a later essay, "The Politics of Nature: Reflections of Politics, Progress and Ecology" Soper herself identifies the engagement of the concept of Nature within these two contrasting ideologies as the "most distinctive contribution" (47) of *What is Nature*. The second section of this chapter will focus on the postlapsarian state of Nature in Milton's poetry, and try to explain how the guilty, wanton, lustful Nature of the *Nativity Ode* or the hostile, violent, postlapsarian Nature of *Paradise Lost* can possibly be reconciled with Milton's monistic theology. It will then seek to determine how this affects an ecological reading of the poem, as well as try to identify what this shows of the broader ideology of *Paradise Lost.* Finally, the chapter will focus on the postlapsarian relationship between Nature and mankind. It will then

explain how, while the prelapsarian state could be said to be ecological, the postlapsarian one can not.

Most of the behaviours analysed so far in this work were situated within the framework of prelapsarian Nature. *Paradise Lost* ends at the moment Adam and Eve are leaving the Garden, which limits the reader's knowledge of postlapsarian Nature to three elements. The first is the behaviour of Nature within the Garden immediately following the Fall. The second is what God's decree (10. 201-8) tells us of man's postlapsarian relationship with Earth. The third is the future before the flood which Michael shows Adam during his vision (11.429-901) and the future following the flood which Michael relates to Adam (12.13-551). Milton himself would of course be more familiar with postlapsarian nature, despite his attempt to justify his knowledge of the prelapsarian state, and of the fall itself, as inspired by a "heavenly muse" (1.6). It is certain that Nature, postlapsarian or not, plays a very important role within the poem. It has so far been amply demonstrated that *Paradise Lost* is critical of the exploitation of Nature that came with the later Age of Enlightenment and Industrialisation, but had already begun during Milton's era with problems such as deforestation, air pollution, and drainage of marshes dealing dire consequences for the local ecosystems. However, following Kate Soper's differentiation between nature-endorsing and nature-sceptical views, it is important to note the contrast between discourse of ecology and that of what can be termed postmodernist cultural theory and criticism. Both have denounced the technocratic and instrumental rationality of the 'Enlightenment' project. While the Age of Enlightenment occurred after Milton's era, the privileging of science over poetry and Nature and the great technological advances that are characteristic of it had already begun in the seventeenth century, as is shown in the first chapter of this work. The criticism of this new outlook on the world, which led to the Age of Enlightenment, was based for ecology on the grounds that its anthropocentric stand has distorted the truth of our relation with the Earth and resulted in

cruel and destructive forms of dominion over it, and for postmodernist theory because it has resulted in an ethnocentric and 'imperialist' suppression of cultural difference. Both have emphasised the links between 'instrumental rationality' and various forms of gender and racial discrimination (*Politics of Nature*, 48). *Paradise Lost*, following the reading presented in this work, appears to be linked to the former. By portraying cruel and destructive forms of dominion over the Earth as linked to Satan and the fallen cohort, while prelapsarian Adam and Eve hold a symbiotic relationship with Nature, Milton could be said to hold a nature-endorsing view.

However, Milton's Nature is not a pre-discursive Nature that is being wasted and polluted, nor is it the domain of intrinsic value, truth and authenticity which Soper tells us ecologists, particularly those of a 'deeper green' disposition, tend to invoke when they speak of Nature (*Politics of Nature*, 48-9). Postlapsarian Nature within *Paradise Lost* is shown as dangerous and hostile. While before the fall Nature is described as "sinless" (which already implies the sin to come) and "devoid of pinching cold and scorching heat" (10.690-1) this changes following the fall. Now, the world knows "sideral blast, / Vapour, and mist, and exhalation hot, / Corrupt and pestilent" (10.693-5). The natural world is far from perfect, and echoes seventeenth century concerns of the corruption of Nature. As seen in the *Nativity Ode*, Nature is now guilty, wanton, wild, and in *Paradise Lost* brings forth "Thorns also and thistles" (10.203). Nature, in Milton's theology, appears to fall alongside with Adam and Eve. It is not naturally corrupt, nor is it essentially perfect as it seems to be understood in some types of idealised ecological thought. One of the defining characteristics of Nature in *Paradise Lost*, compared to other seventeenth century texts, lies within the question of whether Nature ever actually fell. A further complication ensues if one considers that, as Soper points out in *What is Nature*, Nature is both an independent reality and a cultural construction. There is not a single 'nature' but the term can be used to designate a certain number of elements. Whether

Milton's Nature is rather an independent reality or a cultural construction is a question that begs asking. Milton himself, in *De Doctrina Christiana,* claims:

> Nature cannot mean anything except the wonderful power and efficacy of the divine voice which went forth in the beginning, and which all things have obeyed ever since as a perpetual command. (YP 6:340-1)

Defining Nature as the wonderful power of the divine voice would not allow for any widespread corruption or faults within nature, without allowing for corruption or faults within the divine voice. Yet clearly, Nature in *Paradise Lost* undergoes a certain number of changes following the fall of Adam and Eve. Additionally, if all things are still obeying the perpetual command of the divine voice, then that also negates free will. The fallacy inherent to such a conclusion forces the consideration that Nature can be understood as more than just one element within *Paradise Lost.* It is firstly the wonderful power and efficacy of the divine voice, an ordering virtue which puts in mind the definition of Nature as the physical force regarded as causing and regulating the phenomena of the world. Secondly, it is the cultural construction which is referred to when allusion is made to the 'nature' of certain objects, or characters, for example Eve. Nature is both an independent reality and a cultural construction. Nevertheless, if Nature as an independent reality is still following its 'nature' at the perpetual command of the wonderful power and efficacy of the divine voice, then it can not be imagined as entirely corrupt or definitely lost. Perhaps, in order to understand Milton's view of postlapsarian Nature, it is important to understand that it should satisfy a certain number of prerequisites. To begin with, it should explain the decay and imperfection present within Nature which was an important seventeenth century preoccupation. Secondly, it should still be coherent with the monistic nature of Milton's theology, which does not spurn the physical, as the physical is itself of God, particularly since monistic thought does not encourage spurning the physical as is the case in most dualistic philosophy since Plato (despite the hope expressed that Adam and Eve may at last turn all to spirit, and winged ascend,

ethereal). Thirdly, it should condemn the mistreatment of Nature which was occurring during the seventeenth century and which Milton was apparently criticising in *Paradise Lost*. Finally, it must be coherent with Milton's definition of Nature as the wonderful power and efficacy of the divine voice.

The most logical conclusion that can be drawn from these premises is that in *Paradise Lost*, Nature did not fall in the way Satan, Adam or Eve did. Satan, Adam and Eve are clearly described within the poem as having fallen, but that is not the case for Nature. If Nature undeniably underwent a change following the fall, it was through no fault of her own any more than it was through any fault in the power and efficacy of the divine voice. Adam and Eve are the only ones who fell. It is mankind who brought death into the world by tasting the forbidden fruit. This is further demonstrated when Adam calls himself the "source and spring / Of all corruption" (10.832-3) thought the burden is divided "With that bad woman" (10.837). Nature itself is therefore essentially guiltless, and though it is corrupted, that corruption and the ensuing sins of Nature are due to the fall of Adam and Eve. If Nature is affected by the fall of Adam and Eve, it is due to fact that their fall opens up the entire world to the grasp of Sin and Death, which then corrupts Nature itself, a corruption which leads her to sin and of which she is well aware, as she feels shame in the *Nativity Ode*. At the moment Adam and Eve fall, Sin speaks the following words: "Methinks I feel new strength within me rise, / Wings growing, and dominion given me large / Beyond this deep;" (10.243-5). The dominion Sin feels is being given to her echoes the earlier dominion mankind was granted over the world. It also corroborates the thought presented in the previous chapter that there was an inversion which occurred during the Fall, with Adam and Eve being replaced by Satan in their connection to the natural world, due to the fact that in the seventeenth century, the secrets of Nature were considered to be of easy knowledge to Satan (and demons) but of difficult understanding to mankind. The mention of these wings

echoes the earlier passage, shortly after Adam partook of the forbidden fruit, when Adam and Eve "fancy that they feel / Divinity within them breeding wings" (9.1009-10). The wings they feel, and that they fancy to be of divinity, are most likely the wings of Sin. As a result, the dominion of Sin and Death is extended not only to the exterior world, but takes root within Adam and Eve themselves. Sin and Death view Satan's victory as complete, that he now "prevails" in "that new world" (10.255-8). Sin herself tells Satan that "Thine now is all this World, [...] here thou shalt Monarch reign," (10.372-5). Readers, however, perceive the self-aggrandising folly of such thought, as they were already informed that "man shall find grace" (3.227) and that Satan will eventually be defeated, emphasising the pathos of the whole situation. The thematic of the inversion that occurred during the fall, with Adam and Eve losing their place in the natural world to Satan and his cohort, is further shown when Satan claims he has "made one realm / Hell and this world, one realm, one continent" (10.391-2), inverting the promise expressed by God that if mankind is obedient, Earth and Heaven will be made "One kingdom, joy and union without end." (7.160-1).

Satan's self-appointed task is "Earth with hell / To mingle and involve," (2.383-4), and his success, as a result of Adam and Eve's first disobedience, serves to explain how Nature can be corrupted and show decay without actually falling. Nature, Adam, and Eve are all corrupted by Sin and Death, due to the consumption of the forbidden fruit by the Adam and Eve. Milton's Nature is therefore not the often idealised independent reality of current ecological thought. It is tainted, much as Adam and Eve, a parallel further enforced by the comparison of the way Nature tried to hide her guilty front with innocent snow in the *Nativity Ode,* with the manner in which Adam and Eve attempted to hide their nakedness following their fall (10.116-8). Such a view of Earth and Nature as corrupted is hard to reconcile with ecological thought. Additionally, Milton's theology appears even more profoundly anthropocentric in the following passage:

You two this way, among these numerous orbs
All yours, right down to Paradise descend;
There dwell and reign in bliss, thence on the earth
Dominion exercise and in the air,
Chiefly on man, sole lord of all declared,
Him first make sure your thrall, and lastly kill.
My substitutes I send ye, and create
Plenipotent on Earth, of matchless might
Issuing from me: on your joint vigour now
My hold of this new kingdom all depends,
Through Sin to Death exposed by my exploit. (10.397-407)

Despite all the orbs and all of Earth being given over to Sin and Death, it is upon man that Satan instructs his children to chiefly exercise their dominion. Man is clearly the lynchpin of the corruption of Nature, with Nature being entirely subjected to him, as he is the sole lord of all. The ensuing conundrum is that Nature is simultaneously absolved of blame and portrayed as entirely dependent and subject to mankind. Perceiving Nature and animals as secondary to humans is something environmentalism usually attempts to avoid, which would forbid considering *Paradise Lost* an ecological text at least in the modern environmental ideology of the word.

The second part of this chapter will therefore focus on the specifics of Adam and Eve's interactions with Earth and Nature following the Fall. The loss of Adam and Eve's easy relationship with Nature is demonstrated by the sudden hostility of Nature, which will bring forth thorns and thistles when Adam tries to farm, in itself a difficult task, and the sudden wildness of the animals:

Beast now with beast gan war, and fowl with fowl,
And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving,
Devoured each other; nor stood much in awe
Of man, but fled him. (10.710-3)

When Satan reminds Sin and Death that Man was declared sole lord of all, he ignores the fact that Man appears to have lost his place in regards to the Earth he was given dominion

over. Adam must now sweat and struggle to obtain his nourishment, which will be of bread or "the herb of the field" (10.204) whereas before, while tending to the Garden was a task, it was nevertheless an enjoyable one, and his nourishment was of "Nectarine fruits which the compliant boughs / Yielded" (4.333-4). The transition from eating the fruit of trees to eating the herb of the field is quite significant if Hiltner's reading of the fall of Eve as an attempt to pull away from the earth is taken into consideration. The result of God's decree leads to man being forced even closer to his roots. Instead of reaching up to pick the fruit of trees, mankind must now constantly be looking down, whether it be for plowing, sowing, or reaping. Man will always be facing the earth, and be forced to consider the next part of God's sentencing: "thou / Out of the ground wast taken, know thy Birth, / For dust thou art, and shalt to dust return." (10.206-8). The origin of mankind as of the earth is so important that God himself reminds Adam of his birth, and condemns him to return to the earth from which he was made, upon his death. If Adam and Eve fell by attempting to pull away from the earth, and their sentence serves to pull them closer to their birthplace, then the dualistic tendency to attempt to pull away from earth falls under the fire of Milton's criticism once again. This insistence that man not forget his origins also lends importance to the Earth and Nature in opposition to the seventeenth century tendency to privilege science, knowledge and industry over Nature.

Another argument in favour of an ecological reading of *Paradise Lost* would be in the continued communication between Man and Nature even following the fall. Adam and Eve's easy understanding of it appears lost, as Edwards points out in her argument on Adam's difficulty to “read the sun and the fair earth” after the fall as easily as in the prelapsarian world, and when she describes how Adam and Eve must “learn to read fallen creatures” (200). Adam and Eve were readily capable of interacting with and understanding

their natural surroundings, but even in the newly fallen world they are able to maintain some understanding of signs and omens, as is demonstrated in the following passage:

> The bird of Jove, stooped from his airy tower,
> Two birds of gayest plume before him drove:
> Down from a hill the beast that reigns in woods,
> First hunter then, pursued a gentle brace,
> Goodliest of all the forrest, hart and hind;
> Direct to the eastern gate was bent their flight. (11.185-91)

This vision appears just as Eve was expressing the hope that they may yet live in the Garden, content despite their fallen state (11.180). Adam is able to interpret it, to a certain extent, as the sign of some further change or as a warning that they are too over-confident in their discharge. He assumes, correctly, that the birds of gayest plume represent Eve and himself, as does the brace that is being hunted by the lion. While he does understand the omen is not a good one, he does not understand it foretells their banishment and departure from the eastern gate of Paradise. Adam's and Eve's lack of understanding of postlapsarian natural omens is further shown when Adam call the vision "these mute signs in Nature" (11.194), or when, upon learning of their banishment, Eve laments this "unexpected stroke, worse then of death" (11.268). In reality, the birds and the brace, both in the air and on earth, foretold the punishment that would befall Adam and Eve. Likewise, when Eve falls, Nature gives signs of woe (9.783) but Eve does not perceive them, nor does she understand them as condemning her actions. She is described as drunk, and addresses the tree, not understanding the gravity of what she has done, which Nature is expressing through all her works. Likewise, when Adam eats the fruit, Earth physically responds:

> Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
> In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan,
> Sky lowered, and muttering thunder, some sad drops
> Wept at completing of the mortal sin
> Original; while Adam took no thought, (9.1000-1004)

The consequences of Adam's consumption of the forbidden fruit could not have been clearer, had Adam and Eve been able to perceive them. But Adam, in this case, turned away from Nature and fully towards Eve and his own mind, leaving no thought for the obvious pain with which Nature reacts to the consumption of the forbidden fruit. Much as Eve attempted to pull away from Nature, Adam has here turned fully away from it. However, mankind has not entirely lost their capacity to understand natural signs, such as in Adam's vision, when Noah appears to be able to interpret correctly when the dove he sent out, returning, "An olive leaf he brings, pacific sign" (11.860). Much as man may still gather nourishment from Earth, though it must now be at the sweat of his face, he has not entirely lost his connection to Nature.

There are numerous other examples within *Paradise Lost* of an ideological position that would condemn earth-spurning schools of thought, for example when after consuming the fruit, Adam is tempted "to scorn the Earth" (9.1011) immediately before the effect of the forbidden fruit calls his attention to Eve. It is certain that Nature, in all the complexity inherent to the appellation, plays an important role within the poem. Adam and Eve are presented as creatures of the Earth, who would do well to not seek to rise too high above their station, and rather preoccupy themselves with what knowledge they can gain of Nature and Earth, until they naturally ascend to an ethereal and happy state. Ecological readings of *Paradise Lost* such as Ken Hiltner's, with his interpretation of Eve's fall as an attempt to pull away from Earth and the physical world, further emphasise the ecological implications of Milton's monistic theology. Diane McColley's reading of certain seventeenth century poems as a result of the changes society was undergoing as they were being produced allows for a deeper understanding of the stakes of such 'nature-conscious' thought. However, the importance given to Nature and Earth within *Paradise Lost* does not necessarily mean it is an ecological text, as will be discussed in the conclusion.

Conclusion

The aim of this work was to study Nature within *Paradise Lost* and to determine whether the place it gives to the natural world and Earth could make the poem ecological. The current tendency for reading older texts through an eco-critical lens is hardly surprising if one considers the growing importance of environmentalism today. Our society is increasingly threatened by phenomena such as climate change, air pollution, and decreasing natural resources, all problems due to a human tendency to over-exploitation and general disregard for their ecosystem. Any investigation into the origin of such self-destructive behaviour is of great relevance to understanding, and perhaps changing, current policies and societal attitudes towards nature. Studying the place of Nature within *Paradise Lost* proved to be highly informative not only in regards to early modern concerns with environmentalism and ecology, but also, more generally, to the often complex relationship of mankind with Nature. Soper tells us that Western thinking in this area is troubled by what she calls "the paradox of humanity's simultaneous immanence and transcendence" (*What is Nature,* 49). She identifies a dual, conflicting tendency in respect to understanding Nature. The first is that which humanity finds itself within, and to which in some sense it belongs. The second is that from which it seems excluded in the very moment in which it begins to reflect upon either its otherness or its belongingness.

The relation of Adam and Eve to Nature very much illustrates this point within *Paradise Lost.* They are simultaneously physically present inside the Garden, existing as part of a complex ecosystem of plants, animals, where even their home the bower is alive, and an exterior, in some sense superior, force devoted to its care. The complexity of the concept of Nature within human society is further highlighted by the definition of the word, which was briefly presented in the introduction. 'Nature' has a number of different definitions, of which the two that will be presented below are of particular interest here due to the extremely

different things they designate. 'Nature' can be used to describe everything but mankind, as the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans and other human creations. Alternatively, it can also be used to describe innate, or essential qualities or character of a person or animal, and inborn or hereditary characteristics as an influence on or determinant of personality (Oxford English Dictionary, 'nature'). Human understanding of nature as a simultaneously interior and exterior element is thus evident within the English language itself.

Paradise Lost is certainly ecological in the place it gives to the natural world, for a number of reasons. Earth is often described as our great mother. Adam and Eve within the Garden must work hard for their sustenance, but the task is a pleasant one. They are part of a balanced ecosystem of plants and animals, with even their home, the bower, being alive and growing. Most importantly, perhaps, the monistic nature of *Paradise Lost* is such that it is fundamentally contradictory with philosophies or theologies that scorn the Earth, due to their dualistic tendency of privileging Heaven over Earth. On the contrary, in *Paradise Lost*, Michael clearly tells Adam that all of Heaven and Earth are God's, and that God's omnipresence fills land, sea, air, and every kind of organism that lives. He additionally warns Adam not to surmise that God's presence is confined to the narrow bounds of Paradise or Eden, and that both in valley and in plain he is present and will be found alike (11.335-51). Such discourse essentially forbids scorning the Earth, or any kind of living creature, as God is present in all of it. This is further proven by the line saying that all the world was "Fomented by his virtual power and warmed:" (11.338), adding a vitalist twist to Nature philosophy within *Paradise Lost*. Indeed, Milton emphasises his negative opinion of dualist ideology by making such discourse the domain of Satan and the fallen cohort, much as they have the hegemony of environmentally destructive forms of behaviour. A final point in favour of reading *Paradise Lost*

as a nature-oriented text lies in its belief that Man was always intended to inhabit all the Earth, and not just Eden. While Adam and Eve's banishment was indeed a result of their first disobedience, their children were always meant to spread further than the confines of Eden. Michael reminds Adam that:

> All the earth he gave thee to possess and rule,
> No despicable gift; surmise not then
> His presence to these narrow bounds confined
> Of Paradise or Eden: this had been
> Perhaps thy capital seat, from whence had spread
> All generations, and had hither come
> From all the ends of the earth, to celebrate
> And reverence thee their great progenitor. (11.339-47)

Adam and Eve did lose their access to Eden, as well as that of ensuing generations. But these generations were always meant to inhabit the Earth, although mankind can no longer return to Eden in order to celebrate and reverence Adam, which would either way be unlikely to happen due to his newfound mortality. Living outside of Eden would not be a form of punishment, which would negate much cause Christians might have had for harbouring resentment towards the Earth. It would present the Earth as having always been meant to be the home of Man, albeit in a sinless, prelapsarian state, instead of the 'prison' to which mankind was banished due to the impossibility of existing either in Eden or in the ethereal state which they might eventually have ascended to. There are numerous other arguments for reading *Paradise Lost* as a proto-ecological text than those presented above, (see McColley, Hiltner or Edwards). Adam and Eve's proximity to Nature is certainly undeniable, thought it is extremely complex due not only to the immanence and transcendence of Nature but also to the plural manners in which Adam and Eve interact with Nature.

However, there are certain difficulties with an ecological interpretation of *Paradise Lost.* To begin with, the hierarchical position of the natural world is at odds with most current ecological ideologies, particularly the 'deeper green' ones. The poem remains steeped in

Christian tradition, namely with the idea that God created Man, and for him this world. This thought, which is at the heart of many modern environmental catastrophes, is somewhat tempered by the aforementioned omnipresence of God and Milton's frequent calls for humility, temperance, etc., as well as by his condemnation of ecologically damaging behaviours. However, as Edwards reminds us, "Nature is not a self-sufficient, independently functioning system that operates apart from God's will." (32). The natural world is made of God, and the laws of Nature are nothing but the power and efficacy of the divine voice, whose perpetual command all things still obey. Nature is therefore still very much subjected to God, and to Man. Even the ecological postlapsarian vision of Nature in *Paradise Lost* appears to be tainted, so to speak, by the fact the ecological tone is due principally to a more general concern for Christian values such as temperance, simplicity, and love, as well as for the destruction of mankind's habitat, rather than out of concern for the natural world itself.

A further difficulty with giving Nature a positive valence in *Paradise Lost* lies in its use of the concept of nature, for example in describing and justifying Eve's nature. In *What is Nature,* Soper explains that the idea of Nature is and has been used by a variety of hegemonies which objectify Nature in order to justify divisions of a social and/or sexual nature. This is indeed the case in *Paradise Lost*, be it through the consistent tendency of referring to Eve's status as a mother, her likening to the Earth and Nature due to that status, or the justification of the sex's inequality by describing it as the marriage of the vine and elm. Of course, such a use of Nature does not prevent *Paradise Lost* from bearing an ecological message. As Soper demonstrates, environmentalism itself (or 'uncritical ecological naturalism' (149-50)) has often lent support, albeit often unwittingly, to such hegemonies, since any eco-ethical prescription includes the human-nature division.

Additionally, while wild, untamed Nature does play an important role within the poem, the place Adam and Eve are meant to inhabit requires constant care and upkeep. On the

contrary, much ecological discourse seeks to preserve Nature in as a wild, pristine, and untouched a state as possible. Milton's idealised natural world remains a tamed, controlled one, with the wanton growth Eve describes featuring as a difficulty that needs to be resolved by the addition of hands to aid the pair in their labour, or merely serving to isolate and protect Eden. This vision of the natural world is certainly partly a product of its time. After all, untamed nature began to figure as a positive and redemptive power only at the point where human mastery over its forces became extensive enough to be experienced as itself a source of danger and alienation. (Soper, *Politics of Nature,* 54). As for Milton, he was living and writing at a pivotal point where human mastery over Nature had just begun to present its own dangers. As such, his work on the one hand showcases early ecological concerns and makes him, along with other poets and writers such as Marvell or, later, Wordsworth and Humboldt, a pioneer in environmental discourse. On the other hand, he is still steeped in the tradition of considering wild, untamed Nature as a dangerous force as well as in various societal and sexual stereotypes that are a product of his time.

Ultimately, *Paradise Lost* does appear to be ecologically friendly. Its discourse is nature endorsing as to the place it gives to Man in the natural world. It remains, however, fully anthropocentric in its concerns. The theology of the poem does depart from the dualistic Platonic influence on Christian doctrine in its monistic, vitalist message and in rejecting firstly the theology of glory that was characteristic of Catholicism and of which various branches of Protestantism, most specifically Lutheranism or Calvinism, and to a perhaps lesser degree Anglicanism, sought to distance itself. Some, such as Bushell, were beginning to show signs of the theology of glory through various works and mining projects, instead of the *theologia crucis* which Milton appeared to favour. Secondly, *Paradise Lost* rejects physical/metaphysical dualism. It also unfortunately entrenches the exclusion of Man from Nature within tradition and presents mankind as superior to the rest of natural world, and Adam as superior to Eve.

Nevertheless, Milton's vision of Nature and his prescriptions in regards to its treatment would have helped avert many of the problems we face today. In the end, the role of Nature in *Paradise Lost* is not limited to that of a mother. She also has much to teach mankind, as it is through her study that Adam and Eve were first meant to (perhaps) ascend to Heaven in a winged and ethereal form, due what wisdom they could gain from the world around them. If only through this belief, Earth and Nature play a vital role in *Paradise Lost* and in the postlapsarian world.

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